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NORDIC TIME ZONES: TIME-BASED ART IN THE NORTHERN LANDSCAPE

TIME-BASED ART IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT. SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION

SHANNON JACKSON¹

In response to a changing world, contemporary art practices are rapidly shifting, and art institutions and critical methods must transform as well if they are to remain relevant. Increasingly, visual artists in painting and sculpture are turning to the temporal and relational dimensions of performance and media. Meanwhile, choreographers, videographers, and theater-makers have found new contexts for exhibiting their work in art museums and galleries. What do we make of this hybrid work in time-based art? How is time-based art received in museums, in theaters, in film festivals, and in site-specific installations? What new forms of encounter – international, aesthetic, and interpersonal – are crafted in this exchange? How do these hybrid art forms respond to the issues and pressures at work in different regions of the world?

Our proposed project carries forward the research activities of the Arts Research Center at UC Berkeley as well as those of several institutions in Norway, primarily the University of Bergen as well the Bergen International Theater Festival (BIT); Norway's Office for Contemporary Art; the Norwegian Association for Performance (NAPA); the National Theatre of Norway, Oslo; Performance Art Bergen (PAB); and the Henie-Onstad Art Center.

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The Arts Research Center (ARC) is an Organized Research Unit at UC Berkeley devoted to research collaborations that cross art forms and that integrate the arts with other domains of inquiry. ARC functions as a think tank for the arts, organizing conferences, symposia, workshops, and seminars that advance the scholarly research and creative work of its affiliated faculty. Its *Time Zones* project focuses on contemporary time-based art practice and performance in different regions of the world, including East Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. The proposed *Nordic Time Zones* collaboration will explore Nordic art practices and debates, with Norway as its primary focus. It will build upon the current interdisciplinary art pursuits of scholars and curators affiliated with the University of Bergen where collaborations with BIT, NAPA, the National Theater of Norway, PAB, and the Office of Contemporary Art Norway are already underway.

Research Project

This collaboration explores relationships amongst the performing and visual arts. Artistic genealogies in painting, sculpture, dance, theater, film, installation art, and performance art contribute to a complex contemporary landscape in which different artistic temporalities confront each other. As Shannon Jackson (Theater, Dance & Performance Studies and Rhetoric, UC Berkeley) has explored in *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Routledge, 2011), to curate performance – or to curate time-based art – requires artists, curators, and scholars to acquire an understanding of new methods of creation and dissemination. The term “time-based art” is one coined by a visual art world to mark new experiments in space and time that challenged conventions of painting and sculpture, a move whose politics Julia Bryan-Wilson (History of Art, UC Berkeley) has analyzed in *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (UC Press, 2009). At the same time, such a move invites connections to the traditional “time-based” qualities of the performing arts. Is there a time frame for each artistic discipline? How do we assess temporal changes across disciplines? What happens when presumably “static” art forms merge with “durational” arts of performance? How

are some art forms perceived to “stop” time – and to what effect? How do others dilate it? Our project seeks to test the significance, opportunities, and difficulties of such an artistic expansion – for artists, for curators, for scholars, and for the audiences who encounter them.

We note, however, that this kind of artistic expansion occurs within a changing socio-geographical context as well. In a global landscape of asymmetrical development between the Southern and Northern hemispheres, artists work in contexts with strikingly different conceptions of time and space. Norway has emerged as an *ur*-symbol of what Peter Davidson calls “the idea of North,” both for its unique geographical climate as well as for the abundant resources it controls. Meanwhile, Norway’s “arctic” landscape has provided fodder for key artistic experiments of our modern and contemporary era, in both the historic artwork of Munch, Ibsen, and Bergman as well as contemporary art experimentation in video, installation, public art, and post-dramatic theater. Both Norwegian artists and international artists are increasingly called upon to mine the social and geographical issues of the day in Norway – urbanization, religious tolerance, immigration, environmental justice, gender equality, social welfare – and to create artistic projects that provoke deep engagement with Norway’s past and its position in a global future. It is striking that some of the most inventive international interdisciplinary art experiments are in dialogue with Norway’s canonical artistic figures. Ibsen’s oeuvre, for instance, serves as the primary material excavated and reworked in so-called post-dramatic theater across Norway, Europe and North America. Meanwhile, Bergman’s films have offered a vocabulary for current meditations on the nature of cinematic time and the representation of cinematic character and space. In addition, these landscapes have been shaped by interactions with an international flow of artists across national boundaries, including an influential performance by Korean artist Nam June Paik in Oslo in 1961, and the peripatetic wanderings of action artist Kjetarn Slettermark, who traveled through Europe and the US in the 1970s with fictional passport. Norwegian dance was influenced by the Martha Graham School at mid-century and has since developed a postmodern idiom reflected in projects such as Dans Design and Stellaris Dans Theater in Hammerfest. Intermediality has been a

hallmark of some Norwegian practices for several decades, including the theater/dance/music/art hybrids of Baktruppen and the art installations of Inghild Karlsen, Kurt Johanessen, Pia Myrvold, and Ingar Dragset (of Elmgreen and Dragset). This project seeks to mine the effects of this cross-disciplinarity and the development of what might be called an “arctic aesthetic” that is distinctive to this region of the world.

In our project, we seek to track the historical and contemporary significance of hybrid art experiments that derive from what Knut Ove Arntzen (Theater Studies, University of Bergen) calls the central “geo-cultural landscape” of the North, a term that he uses both literally and metaphorically. Arntzen’s own work has focused intently on the “post-mainstream” assembly of interdisciplinary art practices emerging in a region of the world that is both privileged and marginalized as decidedly “Northern.” In this space, a kind of geographic marginality becomes the site of creativity and innovation. As he argues in “A Metaphorical View on Cultural Dialogues”:

Visual art, as well as dramatic expression, is a matter of various personal approaches creating a break with what we could call mainstream thought... In this connection, works of art that assume a closed aesthetic are becoming steadily more obsolete... Landscapes of hybrids are and borderlands are marked by the intersection of cultural lines, creating new images or interiors in the vernacular, spiritual and political sense. (In *The Borders of Europe. Hegemony, Aesthetics and Border Poetics*, edited by H.V. Holm, S. Lægreid, T. Skorgen, Aarhus University Press p. 131.)

Arntzen turns our attention to how individual artists, audience members, and critics experience and respond to a particular time and place, disrupting the concept of a global art world or art market in which “taste” is centrally determined in a small number of elite locations.

Our goal is to take the pulse of these contemporary experiments and to explore their geo-cultural significance from the productive “margins” of the Nordic landscape and lay the groundwork for an edited publication that tracks Norway’s unique contribution to cross-disciplinary debate in time-based art.

Outcomes

Our goal has been to take advantage of connections that already exist between Berkeley and Norway in order to advance research that creates a more precise vocabulary for understanding the international expansion of time-based art. At the same time, we seek to enrich the discourse and practice of artists, curators, professors and students in the wider artistic communities of Oslo and Bergen as well as in the wider community of the San Francisco/ Bay Area, which is why each phase of this research project is accompanied by public programming. Whenever possible, presentations and discussions will be video-recorded and posted on the Arts Research Center website, where they will serve as a resource for ongoing discourse and research.

While in the short-term this research has certainly been to produce results that could be presented at conferences and published in journals, our ultimate goal is sustain and expand the discourse through the production of an edited collection that explores the transnational discourses on time-based art and performance as it manifests in the “Nordic time zone”. This publication, co-edited by scholars from Berkeley and Bergen, will bring together the most innovative thinking on the “time-based art” from both regions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shannon Jackson is a professor of Theater Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, where she has participated in organizing a series of Time Zones-conferences dealing with other global regions. Some of the contributions in this special issue were presented in the Nordic Time Zones: time-based art across disciplines in the Northern Landscape, Wednesday, March 26. 2014, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Bærum, outside Oslo <<http://arts.berkeley.edu/nordic-time-zones-and-beyond/>>.

UNEXPECTED INTER-ART HISTORIES IN NORWAY

FOCUSING THE NORTH: PERFORMANCE ART AND THEATRE IN AN AVANT-GARDE PERSPECTIVE

KNUT OVE ARNTZEN ¹

Abstract

This article gives a survey of Performance Art in a Nordic context exploring the manner in which Norway's experimental artists collaborated across art disciplines, responding to distinctive political and social contexts. It also focuses on the city of Bergen as an international zone of artistic experimentation.

Keywords: Nordic avant-garde, performance art, recycling, visual performance, aesthetic fusion, theatrical body.

Performance between Avant-garde and Recycling

Performance or *performance art* is a term for an artistic genre, which presents a real-time situation, that is, a situation occurring here and now. This implies a dramaturgy with an open structure inspired by happenings and different kinds of actions. The performance uses improvisation within the frame of a specific structure. This structure may have a firm character or be more loosely put together. The artist is telling about and presenting actions by means of his own body or in interaction with effects outside of his own body. These actions may be seen in context with the actual situation in which they are presented. We find the immediate historical background of performance in the 'happenings' and 'events' that originated from interdisciplinary actions

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at Black Mountain College of North Carolina in the 1950s, which again were inspired by European Avant-garde art from the 1920s and 1930s, such as Surrealism, Dadaism, Futurism and Bauhaus. Historically, then, performance may be viewed in context of the modernistic Avant-garde, from Dadaism and Surrealism to Fluxus and Situationism.

As a term, performance art manifested itself within art criticism and art magazines from about the 1970s, which was when the English term 'performance art' was taken into use in order to describe a new form of art, which exceeded the genre barriers (Goldberg 1988/2001, 7). The artist presenting performance art is making use of 'non-fictional' effects, since he is not re-presenting any story or narrative. If a narrative can be derived from it, it is referring to what is taking place at the very moment when a performance is shown. Performance may be compared to what is taking place in jazz during a jam session. Performance can be presented at alternative locations, at galleries or within site-specific contexts. It is an artistic genre, which aesthetically may be regarded in connection to 'operatic' conceptions of art within Modernism, in the sense that artistic work can be like a machine operating real time actions. The effects are presented without having the aim of creating illusion.

Performance art has applied aesthetic strategies of a hybrid kind, transgressing towards the visual arts, videos works and installations. Besides that, it is also absorbed into postmodern theatre forms, in the sense that it combines real time actions and playing with classical illusion. To the extent that it preoccupies itself with the way different forms of art are increasingly combined in new manners, it has become standard to apply the term 'cross-over' to forms of stage art that combine dance, acting and visual effects. Performance art may be viewed in relation to a deconstruction of effects, which is non-hierarchically organized, that is to say that the means of expression are valued equally and are functioning independently of each other. Increasingly, professional art practices have been written into new social and cultural contexts. Performance is in that respect not representing itself as a piece of art, which is representing anything other than it self, or saying anything which is exceeding itself.

Performance art is reflecting aspects of the Situationist movement in Europe, by including experiential strategies and actionist art, as well

as relational aesthetical practices (Bourriaud 1998). The genre has commonly been placed in-between visual art and theatre, something I will focus more closely on in the following. Performance may be viewed in relation to its' belonging to the 'avant-garde', a notion derived from the military profession which literary means 'the troops which are marching in front of the others in order to spy and prepare the way'. Correspondingly there is an 'arrière-garde', a back troop whose preoccupation is the organising and backing up of the progressing troops. 'Avant-garde art' is often prefacing what is the new and experimental. Peter Bürger's description of the term 'avant-garde' emphasises the fact that the historic avant-garde is corresponding to a limited period of time². This made way for the conception of post-modernism, an 'avant-gardism' without any pretension of being avant-garde. It is rather recycling or commenting on classical or modernist art forms. In that connection it is of interest how the performance group Baktruppen took its name in 1986, a name that is mocking the avant-garde precisely by speaking of itself as 'arrière-garde'. However, the name was also inspired by the tradition in Bergen of the local drummer boys marching bands, called Buekorps-brigade with their 'rævedilter' ('bummers'). These are the smallest children who are really too young to join the band. They are, however, mercifully allowed to walk behind the main procession. Such a play with 'avant-garde' vs. 'arrière-garde' may be comprehended within a post-modern metaphoric context where art is no longer innovative in force of being genuine, but where quotations, references and paraphrases are compositing the presentations. This again touches on how post-modern art practices must be perceived in connection to the notion of recycling. In the feature 'Mass Media Culture' Jean Baudrillard writes that one of the characteristics of our society concerning professional knowledge and personal development is 'recycling' (Baudrillard 1999, 64-65). Baudrillard applies the term in relation to updating to the process of becoming professionally aligned with a historical period of time. It is out of this understanding of the term that I will transfer the recycling-metaphor so that it may be applied to the understanding of effects, which are working on extending the

² Cf. Bürger 1998.

boundaries of how you are able to enter and exit works of art by quoting, referring and paraphrasing. This even applies to the way in which the spectators may perceive or experience references and effects in works of art. It demands a desire for curiosity and a sense of experience as to how signals are interpreted and judged by the spectator (Bourriaud 2007).

Nordic Avant-garde – from CoBrA to Kurt Johannessen

The Fluxus movement in the US as well as Polish Surrealism and European Situationism were successors to the historic avant-garde movements of the 1920s and 30s. They contributed to late modernist concept art – intermediated and processed by among others Allan Kaprow, Tadeusz Kantor, Joseph Beyus and Wolf Vostell – who all represented a minimalist and conceptual action art that from the 1970s on was spoken of as ‘performance art’. This generation of performance artists were often object-oriented, and their artistic works were autonomous in the sense that they often were self-referential and minimalistic. Their works of art were often to be presented in galleries and open spaces.

Concerning action – and performance art, the Nordic Countries mainly received their international avant-garde status at a fairly late point in time. Roughly it began with the establishment of the CoBrA-group in 1948. In addition to Amsterdam and Brussels, it had Copenhagen as a basis. Copenhagen had early on become one of the centres of development for Nordic avant-garde art. CoBrA is an abbreviation for Copenhagen-Brussels-Amsterdam, and in spite of it being formally ended already in 1951, the group’s members gained attachment to early Situationism through the cooperation of the Danish painter and artist Asger Jorn with the French philosopher Guy Debord (Debord 1967). Jorn on his side was especially preoccupied with a geographically Northern orientation and of the mythical structures of landscapes. More generally seen, this came to expression through the interest that Situationists took in stone circles in the landscape, of spirals and labyrinths (Tomaszewski 1963). This again reflected a search outside of the common urbanised centres, to

which modernism as such was more commonly attached, pointing also towards folklore and ethnic cultures like the traditional popular culture of Scandinavia or the culture of the Sami people. The collective or the group became a new way of organising the artists in direction of more open and collective methods, like for instance by using live actions such as collective action painting. This again influenced the way the means of expressions were put into work and how they were deconstructed in direction of an emancipation of them. In early performance and theatre this implied that all effects had equal value, and to some degree the spectators were included as witnesses to rituals and symbolically involved in them, like in the case of the Polish laboratory theatre of Jerzy Grotowski and the Odin Teatret of Eugenio Barba in Oslo and Holstebro. The deconstruction of means of expressions and processes within art was consequently followed by an increased geo-cultural contextualising of the function of art, that is to say that the aspect of geographical location both in topography and the identity of the landscape played an active part in the way in which artistic processes and expressions were organised.

A centralised, axis-based philosophy of classical art evolved in Europe since the 1600s, when France was the culturally dominating country, followed Germany in the 1700s and Russia and Austria in the 1800s. These traditional centres needed innovation from outside due to lack of innovation in certain areas, like when French theatre started to look to the Nordic countries for a new drama at the end of the 1800s. Scandinavia developed as a stronghold in music and painting, for instance with Jean Sibelius and Edvard Munch. The Nordic artists – together with artists from Switzerland and other mountainous areas – brought a new sense of landscape into the arts, which then gradually influenced traditional centres like Paris and Berlin. As I see it, in a postmodern perspective global regions got more into focus, reflected in new theories based in post-structuralism, post-colonial theory and finally the so called performative turn. Thereby it is possible to say that a contextualising perspective concerning culture, nature and geography has influenced and radicalised performance art and culture. This means that an autonomous and conceptual understanding of art has substituted a more context-oriented art-perception.

In the Nordic Countries the avant-garde has contributed to this development through being partly focused on landscape and preoccupied with the interplay between man and nature as a context. Artistic re-orientation spurred by Fluxus and Situationism turned the focus away from the idea of the artwork as autonomous, pointing towards actionism and performativity in combination with psycho-geographical actions, which also affected Norwegian visual art. Increasingly the focus was on body and landscape in concrete or symbolist ways, such as in the works of Kjartan Slettemark (1932-2008) and in the works of the artists who initiated the expositions 'Gruppe 66' (Group 66) and 'Konkret Analyse' (Concrete Analysis) at the Bergens Kunstforening (1966, 1970). These artists made use of painting, graphics and lyrics in actionist manners – by use of performative and scenic stunts – while they questioned conventional ideas on the function of the individual in society. 'Gruppe 66' and 'Konkret Analyse' showed actions and happening like performances that were inspired by circus and Tivoli, as was expressed in a television-program on their work (NRK Epoke 1966). Of course there were other sources of inspiration for this kind of actionist performance with a touch of the theatrical as well as advancing on concepts that might resemble – without being confused with – the workers' agitation and propaganda theatre ('Agit Prop'), which however had not been seen in Norway since the 1930s due to the World War 2 and anti-communist sentiments during the cold war. It seems as if the most direct inspiration was from the Danish Situationism with its' roots in CoBrA and pre-war expressionism.

Corresponding tendencies were true for the works of action and performance artists like Willibald Storn (born 1936), Hilmar Fredriksen (born 1953) and Wencke Mühlheisen (born 1953), who all worked within the converging point between exposition and happenings. The inspiration for the Norwegian avant-garde largely came from Denmark, like when 'Gruppe 66' had the Danish Situationist Jens Jørgen Thorsen as guest artist, developing the 'Co-Ritus' manifesto together with Jørgen Nash and Hardy Strid in 1962, based on an understanding of the interaction with the spectators as a ritual as well as social event (Nash, Strid and Thorsen 2011, 368). Storn and Mühlheisen, however, had their experiences from Austria. In a larger perspective – at least according to an essay written by Geir Tore Holm and Søsja Jørgensen – the motor for this

development was the desire to de-commercialise art through use of live-forms of expression, that is to say, artistic expressions that function as a performative here-and-now-expression:

Inspired by happenings in the US at the end of the 1950s, European as well as Norwegian artists made use of live-forms (of expression, my comment) throughout the 1960s. As a counter-reaction to the bourgeois painting and what was seen as a commercialisation of culture as such, the artists were using themselves and produced works of art, which only existed there and then. (Jørgensen and Holm, 2009)

The motivating idea to detect or to describe the tendency toward commercialisation of human interaction was inspired by Guy Debord and his book *La Société du spectacle*. Debord termed it 'the performing society', understood as a critic of capitalistic 'blinding' through commercial show culture (Debord 1967). At the opening of the Autumn Art Exposition in Oslo in 1967, Kjartan Slettebmark did a performance, which might be said to reflect a Situationist attitude. He sat down on a bears hide outside Kunstnernes Hus (the Norwegian Artists Unions exhibition hall) in rose-painted Levis jeans and played solitaire with five thousand Mao cards. Slettebmark's action introduced the performance art-genre in Norway in force of being a one-man production, in contrast to 'Gruppe 66' in Bergen in 1966, whose presentation could be described as a situationistic happening. From the 1980s on, Hilmar Fredriksen and later Kurt Johannessen (born in 1960) gave us important examples of solo works. Both of them have given solo performances at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Samtidsmuseet) in Oslo.

In interviews Kurt Johannessen has spoken of himself as a performance artist working from a painter's perspective. Johannessen has to a small degree only touched the interdisciplinary connection between performance art and theatre. Still, it may seem as if it is within the context of theatre research he has gained academic attention. In 1992 Marianne Roland published a feature on Johannessen, in which she points to predecessors such as Allan Kaprow and Yves Klein – relating performance art to 'non-matrixed performance' – in "that the artist is not

interpreting a part, but performing an action independent of time, place and character, without presenting anything else than the action itself.” (Roland 1992, 93)

Kurt Johannessen’s works were really characterised by focusing on the actions as such, but also in a ‘dialogue’ with objects. He has used this dialogue as a part of a ritual working on nature and the ‘sacred’ earth. Earth, water and fire were the main elements of his performance art at the time, and Roland mentions Johannessen’s ‘Performance 0’ (1987) as paradigmatic for his artistic performance work – with focus on sand, chalk, small light sources and musical accompaniments (101). Johannessen has especially focused on the concentration of the body in space, developing his own particular style such as in the later ‘Performance 91’ at Kulturhuset at Verftet in Bergen in 1991, where he moved his body in a very minimalistic way while his legs were fixed to the floor so that he could not move them.

About Visual Performance

The parts of a happening may be successive or simultaneous, but in spite of there being no fixed or planned narration or action in the dramatic sense, there were auditive and visual actions. ‘Visual performances’ emerged as a more structured and theatrical way of performance that could contain elements of planned narration or minimal drama, which were shown in different kind of spaces and not only in galleries (94). Such ‘narrating’ or ‘corresponding’ structures then became part of performance art like Nick Kaye has described it in his book ‘Art into Theatre’ (1996) (Kaye 1996). The fact that such actions mostly took place in spaces which were not defined as theatrical spaces in the traditional sense touched on Antonin Artaud’s visions of a ‘theatre of cruelty’ (Artaud 2000). Artaud wanted artists to produce theatre in other arenas – such as garages and workshops – rather than in traditional theatre buildings. This opened up for an understanding of alternative locations which gradually gained importance for performance art and happenings. Visual artists began to act as directors of performance events, making exhibitions of visual as well as auditive

character among others in works of Robert Wilson and Jan Fabre. Robert Wilson worked a lot with time lines and slow motion and minimalist movement patterns in productions like 'Einstein on the Beach' (1976) and 'Edison' (1979), and in the 1980s Jan Fabre produced the allegorical and ritually presented dance production 'Das Glas im Kopf wird vom Glas' (The Glas in Your Head is Turning Into Glas, 1987). It was built up as thematic visually very powerful paraphrases of romantic clichés and rituals. More and more pictorial elements, music and textual elements were put on an equal footing thus creating a 'theatre of images' corresponding to a visual kind of dramaturgy. In Scandinavia we see this evolving already from the end of the 1970s with the Danish Billedstofteater and from 1986 on in Hotel Pro Forma, led by Kirsten Dehlholm (born 1945) (Arntzen 1990, 46-47). It was by these groups visual artists became visual narrators or 'auteurs' with their background from painting and art.

The paradox in this inter-artistic movement is that the theatre was renewing itself by including the ritual, the minimalist and the purely picture-oriented. But how then can performance art be understood as conceptual or idea based and minimalist, as is the case for example in early works of Kurt Johannessen? At first it came to a conflict, like the one expressed during a conference on the development of performance art at the 'Le Lieu' Festival in Quebec City, Canada, in December 1994. Here performance artists of the 'old' school performed together with younger artists. Some of the younger artists were of Amerindian origin, and their work was characterised by new ways of inter-artistic confrontation, by telling stories, performing theatrically and social mingling in a new manner, which in some way contradicted the 'old' school by a stronger appeal to social approaches by showing tendencies towards acting and telling stories. This implied that they had found new ways of including ritualistic actions and storytelling in their performances. It seemed almost as if all of the younger performance artists were more or less working in the point of convergence between performance art, storytelling and exposing of rituals. This is typical for the art of indigene populations, from the work of Australian aboriginals to the work of Inuit art and the Sámi theatre in Norway.

Kjetil Skøien, Verdensteatret and Baktruppen

Visual artists and painters have gained an importance beyond the traditional design-function in theatre, in which they were asked to frame a theatrical production in a decorative way according to the director's intention. I would say that this in many ways is a result of the influence of performance art, visual performance and a performance-oriented theatre – this I shall expand on more. When visual artists or painters turn away from the traditional function of being theatrical designers or scenographers, they are actively becoming creative partakers in an innovative manner. Norwegian performance artists have shown the way for this development by describing the span between pure object-orientation in performance art and the style of more complex scenographical and theatrical imagery. We see examples of this both in Kjetil Skøien's projectgroup 'Passage Nord' since 1985, and in the productions of 'Verdensteatret' from 1986 on.

In this work with 'Passage Nord' Kjetil Skøien (born 1952) defined himself as theatre worker. He breaks with concept art and the minimalistic by showing the painter as a theatre-maker and pointing to the fact that 'A lot of today's innovators of theatre are painters, such as Robert Wilson and Jan Fabre. Painters relate to the abstract expressions, they think in images and work out of an intuition more than out of a literary focal point' (Skøien 1996, 65-69). With these words Skøien both closed and widened his understanding, since we may indeed ask why working on texts or literary effects would not be based on artistic intuition. With 'Passage Nord' he has made productions like 'Veien mellom vann og tørst' (The Way between Water and Thirst, 1968) and 'Mannen som fant en hestesko' (The Man who found a Horse's Shoe, 1989).

Led by Lisbeth J. Bodd (born 1958) and Asle Nilsen (born 1958), the Oslo-based project theatre group 'Verdensteatret' (World Theatre) has been working with text in cooperation with painters and dancers. Since 1986 they have created an understanding of texts which includes the characteristics of postmodern theatre – an emancipated or visual dramaturgy. 'Verdensteatret' works with images as linguistic metaphors. In the series 'October-trilogy', which started in 1990 with 'Onsdag 13. oktober-komposisjon' (Wednesday 13th of October Composition) this

group initiates a work based on visual, installation-like compositions which initially take on a spatial character and then gradually become more 'frontal' in the formation of spatial effect. For the first production, Asle Nilsen created an installation-like scenography with an almost 'virtual' waterfall in the background and with an open pool in the middle of the stage that the actors and dancers performed in relation to. In their next production called 'Torsdag 14. oktober' (Thursday 14th of October, in 1992), the irony was underlined in the following manner: "You have to be alone and abandoned by everybody when you are working with art out of artistic inspiration" (Leirvåg 1996, 58). In order to quote Siren Leirvåg on this, the work is all about an author who sits at his desk for the tenth year, still unable to write a word: "A lot of the text material was built around what we may call stories of private character. The author expresses his linguistic problem through a sickly preoccupation with linguistics and etymology" (58). Through these productions Verdensteatret expressed artistic irony, and in Thursday 14th of October, the author-character was performed by a painter. He quoted Strindberg's speculations around language and linguistics with an untrained pronunciation. The painter who acted as the main figure in the play ironically "played" being an installation artist performing in a show.

'Baktruppen' (1986-2011) was a performance group in which visual artists and theatre workers cooperated on projects and worked in the manner of the paradox of confrontations. At 'Baktruppen', the artistic functions and talents of the members were blended in a free and independent manner, in a way, which enabled everybody to do everything independent of predestined functions and acting patterns. Artists from the professions of painting and design worked together with authors, musicians, composers and actors. The artistic productions were characterised by the feature that the bits were first joined together at the very end of the production process. The productions changed along the way and the different effects may be said to have been standing in a kind of gravitational relationship to each other – in the sense that the physical energies were continuously moving or revolving. The 'spatial' and the 'frontal' aspects of the staging were mixed through use of virtual effects like electronic communication, tableaux and projection screens – something which 'Baktruppen' clearly showed in

'Tonight):' (1994), in which the acting took place on large Iranian rugs placed around the spectators and actors.

In 'Tonight):', Baktruppen had laid plans for a kind of digitalised communication during the performance through the Internet that generally might have been reminiscent of the form of 'fax art/mail art' that artists have experimented with since the 1980s and earlier. This work supplies us with the key to an understanding of how these artists as 'auteurs' on their own terms might have contributed to surpassing the confrontation between theatre and performance. Visual artists and painters may involve actors and other theatre workers in their work with video art and installations. We are thus presented with what we surely may call 'performance-oriented theatre'. It originated out of the performance art of the 1970s and evolved in the direction of a 'visual performance' based on different ways of using spaces and installations. The temporal or periodical aspect very distinctly took on a dramaturgical character, something that created a theatre form in which the theatrical expression aesthetically seen came to build equally on the visual and on the textual. The work of performance-aesthetics with space and movement in connection to personal or allegorical material was characteristic of the Danish 'Hotel Pro Forma', which had been inspired by the American theatre director and pedagogue Robert Wilson, and which later came to inspire Norwegian performance artists. Robert Wilson, had explored world of images, which evolves before us like an inner film, and this inner world was something that he wanted to visualise in his work. The exploring of image effects and time structures have been central in this – something which may be related to the discovery of 'duration' as an aesthetical effect, in addition to make conscious use of monotony or slow motion. Technically, slow motion is the same as moving slowly in the space or frontally across the front of the stage or open room, while being aware of the direction of the movement and of the direction you move in. It implies that when artists explore time and movement, they experience the inherent value of slowness, how it manifests itself and gains aesthetical meaning through the interrelation between image and movement. It is when we focus on this that the image effects occur, and then the image creates meaning by metaphors, symbols and allegories in the space and through the movement of the actor/performer.

Aesthetics of Fusion and the Theatrical Body

In the 1970s and the early 1980s visual art and theatre interacted in a form of 'visual performance' making use of complex dramaturgical strategies towards a visual and equalising dramaturgy. It came to a convergence between painting and theatre, in which painting became dramaturgically oriented through the use of film and video as narrative techniques, while theatre on its side became much oriented towards painting. From a post modern and aesthetical perspective, artistic work became more and more conceptual in the 1970s and 1980s, characterised by a symmetry and aesthetical strictness, which in the 1990s was abandoned in favour of a more direct theatrical language in which the mere interaction with the spectators and addressing them directly became more important than the aesthetical dimension. Aesthetics gave way to a stronger exploration of context. Identity as an aspect of the social, the sexual and the geographical was expressed within all art forms, as was the telling of stories in a direct manner, and it was commonly used in art as well as in performance art and the performance-oriented theatre.

The direct physical experience of the actor as a body became the key metaphor for the perception of the actor as a body, while his body experience might simultaneously have represented an allegorical expression – a metaphor for the totality of a theatre production, almost as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Such an effect was established through the use of irony and the addressing of the spectators in an ambient or even relational setting (Arntzen 2007, 110-124). This implies that the social space was made use of as an arena for theatrical action – often accompanied by music as a mood-creating effect before and during the presentation on stage. New techniques involved the use of new technology like video art, electronic computer technology or virtually created mirror-effects. The personal story became the focus, and a lot of artistic experience evolved in the context of the production, both towards an authenticity-seeking personal and neo-political direction.

In the Nordic Countries – as well as internationally – the avant-garde increasingly moved towards a 'fusion' or "mixing" of aesthetical effects and contextual conditions, almost as when a tea bag infused in hot water sheds colours. Visual art has more and more gained a dramaturgical

impact, while theatre on its side has become visual art through the use of installations and new use of the space as a social space. In perspective of the avant-garde, it is in this development we find the circulation of forms, ideas and effects between performance art, visual art and theatre. This circulation supplies us with material for interdisciplinary studies within avant-garde art. Performativity has become part of a row of social events, so that the aesthetical more and more has included the context of artistic production and presentation. This is very much about communication between people in a new and open manner. The avant-garde has had major impact on art and theatre in late modern and postmodern times. This impact still continues as an effect of the historical avant-garde whose expressions are being recycled.

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Knut Ove Arntzen, born 1950, professor in Theatre Studies at the University of Bergen, Norway. He is a theatre critic and has been a scientific consultant to the Bergen International Theatre and Les 20 Jours du Théâtre à Risque in Canada. In 1997 and 1998 he attended the conference series "Vision Zukunft" at Künstlerhaus Mousonturm in Frankfurt am Main, and he has been giving papers at the different research conferences like in Puebla-Cholula, Mexico, Johannesburg, South Africa and Canterbury, UK. The conference on Processes in Theatre, Art and Literature at the University of Bergen in September 2000 was in cooperation with Bergen Cultural City and INST, Vienna. Arntzen has been a regular visiting professor to teach postmodern theatre in Kaunas, Lithuania as well as to the Theatre Academies in Helsinki and Oslo.

**GROUP 66 / GRUPPE 66 – CO – RITUS 1966
CONCRETE ANALYSIS 1970 TO COMMON LIFE 1977-78 AND
WORLD FLAGS 1990-2000**

ELSEBET RAHLFF¹

Abstract

This article gives a presentation of four artistic projects in the period 1966 to 2000, The Group 66 including a Co-ritus event as well as Concrete Analysis and Common Life in the Bergen Art Society, followed up by the very internationally distributed World Flags Project. These projects constitute an ensemble covering some main tendencies in the avant-garde since the 1960s including action art and documentary presentations. Danish born artist Elsebet Rahlff gives a presentation in these venues/exhibition which she took part in on a collective basis for the first three, and was the single artist together with her assistant of the last one, World Flags Project. In these article the background and the events are written about in an artistic research context. The article can be read in conjunction with Knut Ove Arntzen's presentation.

Keywords: Action art, Co-ritus, documentarism, Flags as an artistic expression and global perspectives.

GROUP 66 Bergen Art Society/ Bergen Kunsthall 11.03 – 3.04.1966.
*Art exhibition with 8 Evening Events. Total amount of visitors 14.000.
Record for Bergen Art Society/Kunsthall. GROUP 66 Bok and lyrics
published by own publisher.*

1966. GROUP 66, a group of young Norwegian artists, educated in Bergen, Paris, Copenhagen and London, wanted to make a significant change in Bergen on their return and was granted exhibition space in the

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Bergen Art Society/Bergen Kunsthall as the first group of young artists ever. In Bergen nobody listened to youngsters under fifty, but Group 66 demanded to be heard, wanting to open up for the new art scene and to diminish the space between art and audience. I came to join GROUP 66 fulfilling my part of a deal, buying Danish porn magazines in the underground shops of Copenhagen, strictly forbidden all over Scandinavia at that time. Arriving in Bergen, I walked through the green zone at customs control with “nothing to declare” in my suitcase full of porn. Olav Herman Hansen’s artworks – collages with cuttings from these porn magazines – nearly made the police close the exhibition at the opening day but threats from media wanting to blow up the story made them change their mind. We were fifteen artists in GROUP 66 and four guest artists from Copenhagen – all working in various art disciplines like photo, film, painting, graphic art, textile, sculpture, and also being composers, musicians, writers, performers, poets and actors. This made the exhibition and the evening events consist of a great contribution of cross – overs. Of equal importance to the exhibitions were the evening events with different happenings, new music, jazz, lyrics, films and debates. *Laterna Magica* were experiments with light, images, sound, dance, space produced and performed by Olav Herman Hansen, Elsebet Rahlff and Anne Hedegaard.

The definition of *Co-ritus*: A visual ritual-event, between artists and audience, developed in 1992 by the Scandinavian Situationists Jørgen Nash (Asger Jørn’s brother) and Jens Jørgen Thorsen. It is a cooperation creating a piece of art, focusing more on the art experience during the production process, than on the artwork itself, wanting to relate the art experience to the ritual.

Co-ritus – A Situationist Event Staged by GROUP 66 in Collaboration with Jens Jørgen Thorsen

A board of 4.5x2.5 m was built in the middle of the art space with the audience seated on chairs in a half circle at the front. The Performers were as follows: The Danish Situationist Jens Jørgen Thorsen and Olav Herman Hansen. Stefan Rink was the conductor and the rest of Group 66 and volunteers were the live orchestra playing their instruments while creeping on the floor. A

tape recorder, with a prepared sound tape, kept the order of the rhythms and by pressing the button the conductor made “the concert” begin. Paint was thrown and danced on the board with brushes, hands and bodies following the rhythm of the music. The audience was yelling and shouting comments and 22 minutes later the painting was finished and sold as an art-object to the chairman of the board of the Bergen Art Society, who wanted to cover the inside of his summer house. The performers got standing applause.

The definition of a Happening in the sixties was an event or action with a dramaturgical line for the first part of the course, conditioned by being interrupted by the audience and taken in new and totally unexpected directions. GROUP 66 had several successful happenings.

On one of the evening events Jens Jørgen Thorsen showed a selection of his films and among others his latest film “Pornoshop” from 1965. The film came as an unexpected shock to the audience and was immediately after reported to the police by a member of the Bergen Art Society. In a meeting at the Police Station next day Jens Jørgen Thorsen avoided the fine by his creative explanation.

GROUP 66 also had a Round Table Conference with invited guests, discussing new art spaces for experimental art, art galleries, the Art Academy and an activity house for youth. The media response and debates were massive, continuing long after the exhibition was finished. The exhibition and the evening events gathered a numerous and active audience (800 came on the opening).

In 1969 we established our own art space “Galleri 1” in Bergen and we run the galleri for five years.

GROUP 66: Niels Bolstad. Egil Røed. Lasse/Laurie Grundt. Elsebet Rahlff. Olav Herman Hansen. Ingvald Holmefjord. Oddvar Thorsheim. Per Kleiva. Terje Skulstad. Kjetil Hvoslef. Bjørn Kahrs Hansen. Ragnhild Gram Knutsen. Knut Bratland Kristiansen. Bjørn Hegrane. Lars A. Sæverud. Invited guests, artist participants from Copenhagen: Jens Jørgen Thorsen (painter, film maker, art historian, situationist, (member of the Scandinavian Situationists Drakabygget, Sweden). Walt Rosenberg Actor/performer from the Royal Danish Teater of Copenhagen. Textile Artist Anne Hedegaard and Multimedia Artist Stefan Rink. Elsebet Rahlff, Bergen 2016.

CONCRETE ANALYSIS/KONKRET ANALYSE !970

Bergen Art Society/Bergen Kunsthall 2.10-18.10.1970. Opening hours 12am-10pm. Free entrance. 9 Evening Events. Total number of visitors 11.374 – a record for Bergen Art Society in 16 days.

At the opening of the exhibition there were neither speeches, catalogue, pricelist nor drinks. Nothing what an audience expected to find, but - to make the confusion complete – a surrealistic newspaper by the organizers, Laurie Grundt and Stefan Rink.

Concrete Analyses was an exhibition of 200 artworks, none for sale- and at the same time a surrealistic anarchistic frame for activities and debates. The walls of the art space were covered with black plastic sheets and spray boxes were available.

Art Is Dead Stopp Changing Art Consentrate on the World Support Vietnam Send Your Son the Analysis Is a Kick in Thin Air

These were the statements you met, sprayed in Norwegian on the black plastic, sheets, entering into the art space making a hollow sound as your feet walked on the heavy metal plates covering the *MOTORHIGHWAY – technical and psychological communication* leading you under a bridge covered with textile rags in many colours and directly towards a spinning wheel of shifts workers, their heads hitting the floor with clashes. Turning left you entered a space called *CIRCUS – politics and authorities* and next *THE LITTLE DRUGSTORE – schools, radical literature and bottled doctrines*. Turning right from the highway you came into the *SURREALISTIC MARKED – architecture, religion, music and textiles*, with constructions of materials from demolished wooden houses in Bergen. Here we had a sitting group, speaker's platform, oilcan drums etc. During daytime people came and stayed for many hours, reading, talking, music – jamming. The evening events with happenings, performances, experimental films, concerts, poetry, debates etc. gathered a big active audience. The concrete textiles, the social satire hats and suits, we had made from recycled material, were tried on and worn in the

exhibition by the audience. This triggered spontaneous events, dancing and jamming on all the available instruments. A Dada scope concert *Hommage a Bergen*, for solo instrument light Japanese Suzuki motorbike, a chamber ensemble and a dancing choir of 10 persons wearing white Nixon masks, was performed. Debates with invited politicians, and other VIPs on, how to make Bergen a better place to live – demanding an Art Academy an experimental theatre and art space, a youth house etc. took place in the exhibition. The media followed closely with a lot of response and debate – even a long time after Concrete Analysis was closed. The amount of visitors represented again a record for the Bergen Art society, whose board was very close to being overthrown by their angry members.

PARTICIPANTS: Laurie Grundt, Stefan Rink, (concept and organizers) Olav Herman Hansen, Anne Hedegaard, Elsebet Rahlff, Oddvar Thorsheim, Niels Bolstad all from Group 66 and art students Kim Schwartz, Bodil Lundsteen all contributing with artworks, films, poetry, installations, events, happenings, jamming, debates.

Scandinavian guests artist participants: Kjell Skyllstad Composer/conductor Oslo. Ole John Experimental film maker Copenhagen. Timo Linnasalo Experimental film maker Helsingfors. Kari Rydman Musician composer Helsingfors. Jacqueline Buch & Co. Puppet theatre Copenhagen. Sixten Haage Sculptures Sweden. Marius Heyerdal Sound sculptures Norway. Terkel Hedegaard Painter/multimedia Copenhagen. 'Church Underground' finnish group Helsingfors. 'Day of Phoenix' and 'King Kong' rockband and lightshow from Copenhagen. Elsebet Rahlff Bergen 2016.

COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV 1977-1978

Bergen Art Society 28.01-16.02.1977. 17.008 visitors.18 Evening Events.
Tromsø Art society – Åsgård Psychiatric Hospital 3.11 – 13.11. 1977. 6.000 visitors. 8 Evening Events.
OSLO. Kunstnernes Hus 1.04 – 23.04.1978. 75.000 visitors.10 Evening Events. Trondheim Art Society 12.10- 5.11.1978.14.000 visitors.18 Evening Events. Total amount of visitors 112.000. (Public record for all the exhibition places).

COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV received financial support by The Norwegian Council of Culture. The Ministry for Social Affairs Health Dept., The Ministry for Church and Education, the different counties and municipalities and private sponsors. The Norwegian Council of Culture also granted artists' fees for all the exhibited works in COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV as the first exhibition to receive this apart from the official national and regional exhibitions. 1974 *New Years Eve* – the idea and concept of COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV was discussed between Olav, Elsebet, Laurie (GROUP 66) and Lauri's wife Inger Grundt, researching in Biochemistry at Haukeland University Hospital. The question being – could information about contraceptives, abortion and venereal diseases be danced or painted? Would this information reach out? Could we make an informative art exhibition? – ART TO THE PEOPLE – we wanted to penetrate the wall of taboos both the psychological and physical barriers. Medical students had worked for some time with family planning and wanted foothold in the schools. However, they were not welcomed, and this attitude and denial had fatal consequences. The exhibition concept was met with great interest by different artists, art- and medical students. Five groups were established that worked for two years on informative artworks such as medical information, visualized through paintings, graphic art, textiles and sculptures. The five groups were: 1. Condom and Diaphragm, 2. The Pill and The Coil, 3. Abortion, 4. Sterilization, 5. Venereal Diseases. We had to acquire knowledge about our bodies and were educated by medical students and doctors all the way. Our work was presented and discussed every now and then. The most vulnerable works, showing venereal diseases, were exhibited inside a textile house – “a happy home” – allowing the visitors to have a good look without being watched themselves. The informative artworks in textiles proved to be very useful in a communicative way. Information folders were prepared by the groups. A COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV newspaper with articles and interviews was edited by the author Merete Wiger. A library of relevant international literature was collected. The evening events featuring among others sexologist Berthold Grunfeld, psychologist Tore Langfeldt, and a theatre group of school kids performing their piece “Why did you teach us so little?” Visual artists, including GROUP 66, joined to broaden the theme

on common life with relevant artworks. Historical art works from Edvard Munch and Christian Krogh were borrowed from the National Art Gallery. Our children drawings on the theme were shown at the right height of eye. In that way, the theme of COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV was elaborated by theatre, dance, music, talks, films, debates, artworks and this made it even more cross- disciplinary and innovative. School classes made appointments and were taught about sexual life and their own body by medical students in the exhibition. The media coverage and debates were enormous. The leader of the school board banned the exhibition, and the Norwegian Television NRK made their own TV production, working for three days in the exhibition. COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV was a consecutive event from midday to midnight, with free entrance in the opening hours from 12am. to 7pm. and an entrance fee of kr. 3 for the evening events from 7 pm. to 11 pm. The Evening Events gathered a big engaged audience and the debates on very intimate themes were quite amazing and surprisingly courageous. The visitors' debate book and opinion wall paper was also responded to. Leaving the exhibition, you would passed big baskets with free condoms.

After having worked four years with COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV and getting request from the rest of Scandinavia and not feeling able to deliver – it was a lot of work to keep touring the exhibition – we packed it and stored it away and feeling very bad and that art definitely had its limits, and was in this case too exclusive. We wanted a permanent art space for COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV so that people could use it as long as needed. Some of the works, however, found its ways to doctors' waiting rooms and the information folders came to use as well.

Inger Grundt and Elsebet Rahlff: concept, co- concept development, participants and co-organizers of COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV in Bergen 1975 – 1977. The project was accomplished with more than 50 contributors. From 1977 – 1978 Elsebet Rahlff and Annbjørg Eide were the administration in Bergen, participants and co- organizers in collaboration with local contributors, installing the touring exhibition COMMON LIFE/SAMLIV in Tromsø, Oslo and Trondheim 1977-1978. Elsebet Rahlff, Bergen 2016

WORLD FLAGS / FLAGS FOR OUR WORLD 1990-2000

– Artwork in progress – global transit concept and produced by ELSEBET RAHLFF co.prod. BIT Teatergarasjen Bergen and 3rw Architects Bergen Norway.

The art project has been shown in the following places:

1990 Festival Square, Bergen. 1991 Aker Brygge, Oslo, Norway.
1992 MAM, Museu de Arte moderne do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
1993 `Nachtbogen` projekt kunst-raum-strasse, o-zwei, Berlin.
1994 Alexander Platz, Berlin, Germany. 1996 Århus Festival, Denmark.
2000 Nordic House, Reykjavik, Iceland. 2000 Eu-Parliament, Bruxelles, Belgia. 2000 Festival Square, Bergen, Norway.

The Concept of the Flagproject

On the move from one place in the world to another, consisting of traditional national flags in a new concept, shown on installation of flagpoles in specially chosen locations, in a variety of contexts. WORLD FLAGS/ FLAGS FOR OUR WORLD all have the same colour, the multi-colour of gray, not found in any of the national flags from before. The national symbols and identities are opened, made transparent, by pierced structures of large and small holes. The flags thus absorb the surroundings and opens up to debate on themes like environment, new identities, multiculturalism, transparency across all borders, visions for the future and even peace.

WORLD FLAGS/FLAGS FOR OUR WORLD are treated in the same way, with the same rules as for all the national flags. They follow the sun, are hoisted in the morning and lowered in the evening by a local team of assistants, supervised and supported by the art projects own coordinators. This event takes about one and a half hour twice a day and creates an important contact with the public making it possible to get close to the flags, to pose questions and debate in local languages.

The Story of the Flags (a Short Version)

The first series of eleven gray FLAGS FOR OUR WORLD was shown at the Festival Square of Bergen in connection with the International Environment Conference 1990 and supported by The Norwegian Council of Culture. The flags created a massive debate locally as well as in media all over the country, causing also physically aggression, making it necessary to provide each flagpole with a special guard to protect the flags. In 1991 the flags were shown on a half circular installation of flagpoles at Oslo's waterfront, Aker Brygge, in collaboration with the theater group VERDENS TEATERET. Next was the RIO- 92 Global Environment Conference in Brazil. I put together a small team; Ragnar Hansen working with developing aid in Africa and Asia, speaking fluently Portuguese, and the project assistant, my twenty year old son, Sixten. We went to Rio with fifteen flags as our hand luggage and were picked up by Gregory in his yellow rio-taxi. Gregorio showed up to be a journalist and in no time he and his taxi became the fourth member of our team. Gregorio helped to introduce us to Rio, to the politicians from the Green Party and the NGO's. We ended up by being invited by MAM, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, to collaborate with choreographer Regina Miranda, and a variety of Brazilian artists. The flags were incorporated in the opening performance ECOMOES TERMINALS "in Palco Alberto's OPEN STAGE – RIO 92". These events, in the open space at MAM, was the cultural start of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment Rio-92.

FLAGS FOR OUR WORLD/BANDEIROS PARA NOSSO MUNDO were exhibited at MAM for a week on flagpoles we had organized to be made from steel waterpipes. The Brazilian flag is now included in MAM's art collection. The following year 1993, I was invited to Berlin to show a small series of flags at "Nachtbogen" projekt Kunst-Raum-Strasse, Wolfgang Krause, o-zwei, Oderbergerstrasse in Prenzlauerberg. After this event I started working with Wolfgang at o-zwei planning to show FAHNEN FÜR UNSERE WELT/FLAGG FOR OUR WORLD on Alexander Platz. Presenting the flagproject, getting the support that was

needed, applying for money and permission. I had to use quite some time to get to know the grim story of Berlin. Wolfgang was a great help with what he saw as the most essential knowledge and experience, preparing me and the flags for the tough meeting with Alexander Platz. In 1994 the flags were shown on the twenty-eight old iron flagpoles on Alexander Platz, in the former East Berlin, under the protection of co-prod. Wolfgang Krause and o-zwei. During the period of twelve days showing the flags on Alexander Platz, o-zwei functioned as an open discussion arena, on the story of the flags and the daily documentation and information received from Alexander Platz, as well as presenting a few of my other artworks in the gallery. Next came the invitation in 1995 from Trevor Davies, the art director of Copenhagen-96 European Cultural City, offering the possibility and inviting me to produce all the flags from the rest of the world at the Cultural Factory in Copenhagen. I was given an international team of twelve assistants, among them professional seamworkers from the clothing industry. The flagproject expanded and during 1996 over two hundred flags from all the nations in the world were produced by me and my competent and devoted team of assistants, under my well prepared supervising. Thousands of holes were cut with small scissors while the discussions in the team took surprisingly different directions on the themes of the project. The title changed to WORLD FLAGS, and a large series of flags were shown during the Århus Festival 1996. In 1999, Bergen European Cultural City 2000 donated a production of one hundred steel flagpoles, nine meters high, on mobile foundations to the flagproject, designed by 3rw Architects, Bergen. WORLD FLAGS were then shown in three of the nine European Cultural Cities of 2000. Flags from the whole world, were shown at the European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, alternating on installation of seventy flagpoles. Then came Reykjavik, showing the flags outside the Nordic House on Iceland. Later that same year 200 WORLD FLAGS were shown alternating on the installation of the one hundred flagpoles at the Festival Square in the center of Bergen.

The response from media and the public was massive all the way. The debate became increasingly more and more engaged and interesting. My conclusion is that the beautiful multi-colour of gray is the right colour for this global project representing everyone and the comments from younger people were “that these flags are much better than the ones we have from before”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elsebet Rahlff studied at the State Design (Art and Craft) School at Copenhagen to become a visual artist specializing in working with textiles and following two years at 'Atelier 17', in Paris studying graphic art. Since 1963 Rahlff participated in a series of exhibitions in Denmark, France and subsequently Norway, settling there in the mid 1960s. Rahlff played a major role in the presentation of new art forms, such as happenings and installation work. Rahlff has also lectured and tutored students as an associated professor of Bergen Academy of Art and Design.

THE FIGURE OF PERFORMANCE IN NORDIC ART IN THE EARLY NINETIES

JONAS EKEBERG¹

Abstract

In this paper, I would like to present some observations regarding Nordic performance and social art in the early nineties. I will not only look at the works of art as such, but also at their role within the art scene and how performance and social art was used to usher in a paradigmatic shift on the Nordic art scene: that from a late modern to a contemporary situation. This shift can be described in many ways, but let me simplify it by proposing that it means a situation where new media and intermedia is no longer the exception, but the hegemonic order of art. In the Nordic context it also means that the idea of an art with specific "Nordic" traits like light, nature and melancholy was finally rejected and replaced by an ideal of a cosmopolitan Nordic situation, a Nordic art scene rather than a Nordic art.

Keywords: Nordic art, Nordic performance, social art in the early nineties, Nordic situation, Nordic art scene.

In my abstract I have already used a number of terms that could deserve closer examination and exact definitions, but for now I will suggest that we take most of them at face value. I do wish however, to look briefly at the term "art scene". It is curious how often this term and its near-synonyms "art world", "art field", "art institution" etc. are used without being clearly defined. The important difference between the idea of an «art scene» and the other terms, is that the concept of *scene* frames the conditions for art in *productive* and not *reductive* terms. In stead of looking at *the art field* as "the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate" (Bourdieu 1993, 78), as the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would

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have it, we can see *art scenes* as an “overproductive signifying community” (Shank 1994, 122), in the words of the American cultural historian Barry Shank. This is not the least important in a Nordic context, which in the early nineties still had a provincial character. In this situation, a productive relation between various art scenes and various institutional formations was of vital importance for art.

Oslo One Night Stand 1995

Let us turn directly to what I propose is the high point of the new Nordic art scene of the early nineties, the event *Oslo One Night Stand*, held at Kunstnernes Hus here in Oslo in the beginning of December 1995.

A festival of at least 70 artists, this event was intended to run for 24 hours. It featured performances and events in all genres, from regular plays via events and happenings to social projects involving the audience. Especially the latter was of significance, and in my view, *Oslo One Night Stand* was one of the most significant manifestation of what was later to be called participatory practice or relational art in the Nordic countries.

At *Oslo One Night Stand*, the borders between art and non-art was intentionally blurred. The Finnish-Swedish duo Jukka Järvinen and Karl J Stigmark did a performance called *Washing*, in which they were washing up plates, cups and cutlery from the restaurant. The Danish artist Søren Martinsen performed *Funny Guy*, in which he forced himself to laugh until he almost fainted.

In another piece, the now famous duo Elmgreen and Dragset performed a slow pas-de-deux as they unraveled each others white, knitted skirts, making a mess of the leftovers as they undressed each other.

The Swedish artist Anders Boqvist held a “Scandinavian Speed Contest”, simply challenging audience member to speed race in an electric car racing game. The Norwegian artist John Øyvind Eggesbø served hot dogs without really disclosing how or why it was a performance and the Icelandic artist Hekla Dögg moved slowly amongst the audience with dough floating out of her breast and back pockets, all the while Dorinel Marc strolled around dressed in a doctors outfit,

asking people sincerely “How are You?”. Upon receiving an answer she would offer a simple medical examination or simply the possibility of a therapeutic conversation.

Elin Wickström, the Swedish artist who later would be mentioned among the leading exponents of relational aesthetic, did a piece in the staircase called *Åsa has given it to Bill risks not getting it back and Pål...*, in which money exchanged hands amongst a mix of initiated actors and unknowing members of the audience. All of this, and more, was set in relief by the British artist Jonathan Monk who performed a piece called *Real Art -95*, in which he, parodically, carved away at a slant of wood like a real sculptor – until there was nothing left of it. And then it was the videos, which also, mostly, were documents of performances.

As it turned out, the project was shut down at two in the morning, due to complain from the neighbors. Thus it lasted only twelve hours, not twenty four. This was in fact no disadvantage, it only helped to show the ambivalent character of the event, being both inside and outside of the art institution, held at the major kunsthalle Kunstnernes Hus, but without any contribution from the hosting institution.

Pre-history

Now, let's back up a little. *Oslo One Night Stand* was a manifestation of a new artist role, a new kind of art and an opposition to the late modern Nordic art institution that had been coming together for some time. In this process, the opening up of the languages of performance played a crucial role.

Prior to the nineties, on the Nordic art scene of the eighties, performance art was largely seen a modern medium, seeking its own specific qualities. In two significant instances – with Roi Waara in Finland and Kurt Johannessen in Norway – it was practiced by male solo artists that would counter the noise and hassle of contemporary urban-media-consumer society with zen-like actions. Significantly, Waara would frequently dress in white and Johannessen would only dress in black, uniforms chosen to underline the meditative qualities of the work.

Outside of the visual art context, performance art was also practiced by so called live art groups, coming out of the tradition of

experimental theatre. Leading live art groups in the Nordic countries were Hotel Pro Forma in Denmark and Verdensteateret and Baktruppen in Norway, all started in the mid eighties.

Moving into the nineties, there were some overlaps by the performance and live art of the 80s and the emerging scene. Nevertheless, the performance and social art of the nineties broke with the tradition of performance up until then in several significant aspects.

First of all, as we saw in the works from *Oslo One Night Stand*, it completely embraced the messiness of popular, consumer and media culture. Mostly, this was done in order to subvert it, but there was also a joyous character in much of the work. The zen ideal of purity and tranquility was definitely left behind.

Secondly, there was a blurring of the lines between performance art and other art forms. If the performances of the eighties were clear and distinct events, many of the performances of the nineties were merging with installation art, video and social events. As such, they were instrumental in forming an art scene, rather than creating an audience.

Thirdly, the performance art of the nineties, together with parallel art forms, represented a belief not only in the necessity but also in the possibility of creating a new art institution. This was, again, contrary to the situation of the eighties.

Copenhagen 1993-1994

Some of the most important manifestations of this new art scene occurred in 1993 and 1994. In Copenhagen it was artists groups, and micro-institutions that formed the most central arenas. Globe, Campbells Occasionally, Saga Basement and Nørre Farimagsgade 55 were some of the most important, and all were part of an emerging Nordic network of independent galleries. At N55, the event «Social Video» was presented in 1994. After an open invitation distributed in Denmark and Scandinavia, all videos submitted would be presented at monitors facing the street, in the order they were received. This event – uninventive as it may seem today – attracted a large crowd and turned into a big street party (Carstensen 1995, 7).

A commercial gallery also comprised part of the Copenhagen scene. Nicolai Wallner, today a major player on the international gallery scene, opened his space in 1993 with an exhibition containing no less than 38 artists, simply titled "Opening Exhibition". It was a veritable energy explosion, and its young, eager and aggressive character was underlined by works such as *Fobic with reason*, a large Tarantella spider in a cage, and the sound installation *Barking Dogs*, which was audience activated.

Sweden 1993-1994

In Sweden, three events of the years 1993 and 1994 stand out. The exhibition *ICA* in Malmö, the opening of the gallery Ynglingagatan 1 and the event *New Reality Mix* in Stockholm all mark the link between conceptual and installation work on the one hand and performance and social art on the other.

The show *ICA*, which was both the name of a grocery store and an allusion to the acronym for Institute for Contemporary Art, the kind of internationally oriented art institution not found in Malmö at the time. Most of the 12 artists worked conceptually, but the most discussed work was without doubt Elin Wickströms piece "What would happen if everybody acted like this?", in which she stayed in bed amongst the shopping aisles for three weeks during the opening hours.

Also in 1993, the artist run gallery Ynglingagatan 1 opened with a solo presentation by the Norwegian painter and conceptual artist Bjarne Melgaard. He presented numerous drawings in the typical 'low' fashion of slacker aesthetics; mixing images and text – especially of swimming pools and the name and phone number of his boyfriend – the drawings were stained, dirty and pinned to the wall, some even simply laying in the windowsill. This slack was about to become one of the most important formal traits of the new Nordic art scene, and one that decidedly set it apart from the late modern Nordic art of the eighties, which strived to conform to the production value and authority of the New York gallery scene. This new art was tailored to the emerging, local and regional artist run art scenes in Europe. On the opening night of the show, the gallery's lights were shut off and Melgaard performed the act

of calling his boyfriend and quarrelling loudly. It was “equally personal and embarrassing”, according to the Swedish critic Håkan Nilsson (Nilsson 1993, 9).

For the exhibition *New Reality Mix* in 1994 – which could be said to serve as a model for *Oslo One Night Stand* the year after – a group of Swedish artists had invited a group of artists from the US for a weekend of “ongoing actions and singular live performances”, as it was phrased in the invitation. In addition, the event consisted of “various video pieces, shown continuously on monitors here and there”.

The most important of the international guests that weekend in Stockholm was the US/Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. Tiravanija was emerging internationally as a leading figure of “relational art” and this night in Stockholm he served Thai curry and meat balls. Later, one critic triumphantly declared that many of the visitors – even highly initiated art professionals – did not know that what they were eating was art (Allerholm 1994, 71). Other artists at *New Reality Mix* included Stig Sjölund, an artist who could be said to personalize the transition from conceptual art in the late eighties to social performance in the early nineties. At *New Reality Mix*, Sjölund performed a tongue-in-cheek drag cabaret with some of his students. Additionally, as were reported in the Swedish art journal *Material*, the poet Karl Holmqvist slowly slyly recited The Eagles’ song *Hotel California*, making the audience read along for the line “we haven’t had this spirit here since nineteen-sixty-nine”. “It’s stuff like this that Kant would have called sublime”, quipped the critic Erik van der Heeg, as he hailed the event as “the social art event of the fall season” (Van deer Heeg 1994, 12).

Oslo 1994-1995

Making the move now to Oslo and Norway, we should make note of the structural differences between the Danish and the Swedish art scenes on the one hand and the Norwegian, Finnish and Icelandic on the other. At the time, Denmark and Sweden were still cultural superpowers compared to the three other Nordic nations. Thus, the international connections made in Sweden at *New Reality Mix*, looking towards the US, or in Denmark at *Globe*

and Gallery Nicolai Wallner, looking towards Europe, were not made in Norway to the same extent. This was, again, a dynamic characteristic of the late modern art institution, which would change towards the end of the nineties. But around 1994, these mechanisms were still very much in operation. One could say that the provincial position of the whole Nordic art scene towards the international art scene, was repeated internally in the Nordic countries by the provincial position of Norway, Finland and Iceland towards Denmark and Sweden. It is in this light one must understand the Nordic character of the events unfolding in Oslo in 1994 and 1995. The young Norwegian art scene still needed the Nordic context in order to frame the new art.

The first of the events in Oslo was *The project in Gamlebyen*, in which around 90 Nordic artists showed their work in the old part of Oslo for two weeks. Like at ICA in Malmö the year before, it was urban interventions which was the order of the day, but the project also included several performance nights at the run-down industrial plant Borgen. The opening prologue was held by the live art group Baktruppen which ambiguously hailed the artists and the audiences as avant-garde: "Dear Avantgarde/I sought more identity/In my shit/Than in my wit" (Baktruppen 1994)². This playful and transgressive tone was, and to a certain extent still is, a characteristic of the Oslo art scene that distinguishes it from the more sober and professional tone of the Stockholm art scene and the more established subcultural positions on the Copenhagen art scene.

The project in Gamlebyen was followed by two events in 1995. First, in January 1995, the event Art Attack unfolded at the Young Artists Society and at four independent Oslo galleries. In a networked curatorial effort, four Danish, three Swedish and two Finnish galleries were invited to show their artists together with the Norwegian hosts in an event that was generally hailed as a high point of slacker art in the Nordic countries. From the administrators point of view. The project was specifically directed towards connecting the Norwegian art scene to the larger Nordic network of artists and galleries, which included all the mentioned galleries from

² See Baktruppen, "Åpningen av PiG" (Prosjektet i Gamlebyen), 1994. Read online: http://baktruppen.bek.no/div_htmls/pig.html 28 July 2016. Norwegian text: «Kjære Avantgarde/Jeg har søkt mer identitet/I det jeg dret/Enn det jeg vet»; translation by the author.

Copenhagen and Stockholm. One of the key characteristics of this network was that it merged the various formal organizations such as Young Artists Society in Oslo, Muu in Helsinki and The Living Art Museum in Reykjavik with both alternative and commercial galleries. On the Nordic art scene of the early nineties, this was still a viable collaboration, as the established national and Nordic art institutions was still a common enemy.

The Oslo connection was reinforced by *Oslo One Night Stand* eleven months later, at the end of 1995, and once again confirmed by the event *Oslo Band Stand* in 1996. As we have heard, the former was a durational event with low or no barriers between the performers and the audience. In the latter, on the other hand, the division between the stage and the audience was reinstated, as if to show that the subversion of the white cube could be extended to a subversion of the theatre scene. However, on the stage of the rock club John Dee the generation who were radical inventors at *Oslo One Night Stand* quickly stiffened, and at times the performers seemed like mediocre amateur musicians. In this, I speak from personal experience, as I was the Master of Ceremony at the said event. Perhaps some of the energy of the scene was already fading.

Copenhagen 1996

There is no time here to go into similar events in Finland and Iceland. They do exist, but there were not as many as in the Scandinavian countries. However, I would like to return to Copenhagen briefly before concluding.

Towards the end of the nineties, the Nordic art scene went through a process of internationalization, professionalization and institutionalization. By the turn of the century, the Nordic art world would be completely transformed. Many of the alternative galleries would disappear, the Nordic networks would be replaced by international networks, the institutions and commercial galleries would take over the leading role and new artist initiatives would be directed towards an explicit critique of capitalism and globalization, a political sentiment not seen in the early nineties.

As these changes were mounting, a high point and a farewell to the Nordic art scene of the early nineties could be experienced at the "Turbine Hall" in Copenhagen in 1996. The event "Update '96" featured

artists, performers and activists, gathered by the artists Jes Brinch, Henrik Plenge Jakobsen, Jens Haaning, Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen, Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset. The event was described like this, by the Swedish artist Alexandra Mir in an interview ten years later:

They had invited over 100 participants through their own informal network to come to Denmark, co-exist and create work together. The formal artworks spilled over in live and direct negotiations about the validity of art, which spilled over into the forming of actual relationships which spilled over into more work being created. (Sherwin 2006)

Mir's own work consisted of several pieces: She was part of the project *New Rock Feminism*, which propagated for more female rock bands at the Roskilde Festival that year, she installed the piece *Welcome (Stereobar) – Birth and Demise of a Drunken Democracy*, an electronic cue system for the bar at the event which would ironically counter the normal social havoc at such a place, and, finally, she had also the privilege of designing the entry to the event, in which she had installed line dividers and guards with dogs, again counter to what you would expect at an event of this kind. Pointing metaphorically to the barriers existing within such 'alternative' events, Mir frustrated many visitors who, approaching the entrance alone, would have to crisscross the square several times, in stead of approaching it directly.

Conclusion

On the Nordic art scene of the early nineties, performance existed in parallel to conceptual art and installation art and it was a precondition for video art and social art. Its most important features however was its "liveness" and its "realness", the way it punctured the membranes that separated the artist from herself and from her audience. This idea of "the real", was perhaps the single most important part of the self-understanding of the Nordic art scene in the early nineties, and it was summed up like this, by the Swedish art critic Maria Lind, in 1996:

I takt med att vår tillvaro alltmer präglas av mediering och att vårt sätt att se och uppleva världen omvandlas mot det abstrakta och okroppsliga, fördjupar sig samtidskonsten i indexets bokstavliga spår, engagerar sig i faktisk interaktion och betonar förkroppsligade upplevelser. Den söker sig till vardagens aktiviteter och scenarios, dramatiserar dess symptom och spår, placerar sig mitt i dess händelsesförlopp. Det tar sig olika uttryck: å ena sidan har vi den drastiska och ofta våldsfylta konsten som refererar till samhällets skumlare sidor, å andra sidan kontextkonsten som vill skapa förutsättningar för samexistens och bereda plats för genuina möten. (Lind 1996, 36)

Performance art was the central embodiment of this “realness”.

Furthermore, site specific art, performance and social art was the glue that kept the art scene together. And in the push and pull dynamic of art scene versus art institution, the scene was crucial in this particular period. Alexandra Mir sums up an essence of the Nordic art scene in the early nineties:

I have since taken part in over 100 other shows, but no prestigious biennial or institutional exhibit has offered me anything close to the dynamic, freedom, risk or energy as that first one. More importantly, it set the moral tone for me and myself-initiated projects so it is in effect always present and continuously affects the way I work.

This paper has been a first look into the dynamic that brought the Nordic art world from late modernism to contemporaneity and how this, in turn, seemingly put an end to the provincial situation. My suggestion is that the parallel opening up and wide application of performance-based practices played a crucial role in this process.

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CONTEMPORARY INTER-ART PRACTICES IN THE NORDIC LANDSCAPE

CURATING TIME BASED ART IN OSLO

JON REFSDAL MOE¹

Abstract

This article reflects some experiences of being a curator of live art in a black box theatre, like the *Black Box Teater* in Oslo. It touches upon the question of curating as such and how it influences the notion of what theatre is when it is applied to such a context. The relational aspect of theatre is being examined, using references to Michael Fried and Antonin Artaud.

Keywords: Black box theatre, the term theatre, audience and relational aspects of live art, visual art context.

Black Box Teater is as the name suggests, a theatre space. Of course this means that it is devoted to theatre. Not devoted of course to just *any type of theatre*, but to theatre that is acquainted with the aesthetic notion of *the blank space* – the black box – the theatre's counterpart to the *white cube* of visual arts institutions – a term closely connected with modernism in the theatre, as the white cube would be a modernist concept in the visual arts as well. So Black Box Teater would be a place in which modernist theatre occurs.

Oslo International Theatre festival suggests a somewhat broader approach, but still as it is curated by Black Box Teater, it also suggests – at least to the local context – an affiliation with the modernist concept of theatre – i. e. the black box. Does this mean that Black Box Teater is

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devoted to modernist theatre? Or does it mean that we present only theatre in a very modernist sense of the term? Absolutely not. The term *theatre* today has to be understood in terms of what it is *not* just as much as in terms of what it *is*. It is not even clear whether there is such thing as a modernist theatre – or if there ever has been – that is, if we operate with an *Greenbergian* concept of modernism, or of modernist art, as an art devoid of references to other arts, or other modes of cultural expression, - hence the blank space or the black box.

To a strictly modernist sensibility, it could be said that theatre in itself is that which the other arts are *not*, or have *not* been. “Theatre is now the negation of art” (Fried 1992, 825), Michael Fried writes in his 1967 essay “Art and Objecthood”, and he continues: “The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre” (830). To Fried, famously, theatre was the antithesis of everything that he considered artistic in art – not only in the visual arts but also in the theatre itself – he cites Brecht and Artaud in support of this claim; that they attempted to overcome the theatrical with their own theatre writings. “For theatre *has* an audience – it *exists for* one – in a way that the other arts do not; in fact this more than anything else is what modernist sensibility finds intolerable in theatre generally” (830), Fried writes. Two years before, when choreographer Yvonne Rainer writes her No Manifesto (1965) it is precisely the same relationalism – that it exists *for* someone – that she wants to do away with in dance: “No to spectacle (...) No to involvement of performer or spectator (...) No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer (...) No to moving or being moved”².

In order to establish their art forms more thoroughly by reducing them to their essential elements, Rainer and Fried alike denounces any type of relation between the artwork and the spectator. Quite conversely, it is precisely this relation that constitutes the *sine qua non* of art in the most influential theatre manifesto of the 1960: Jerzy Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor Theatre* from 1967. Grotowski writes: “By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a

² See Rainer, in *Tulane Drama Review*, 1965, 10(2):178.

separate performance area (stage) without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationships of perceptual, direct *live* communion." (Grotowski 1967, 2) and Grotowski goes on:

Can the theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance. So we are left with the actor and the spectator. We can thus define the theatre as "what take place between spectator and actor» (2).

This relational nature of theatre, the fact that it exists *for someone*, is here made the basic foundation of it as an art form – there can be no theatre if there is no one to perceive it. This makes theatre an art that constantly undermines itself *as art*, if one understands art on the same terms as Fried and Rainer.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, this same theatricality that formerly had been denounced began to be embraced in the discourses of contemporary art and contemporary dance alike. The most well-known example of this is French curator Nicolas Bourriaud's concept *relational aesthetics*, which rose to fame in the early 2000s, and which (knowingly or not) repeated and repackaged the rhetoric from Grotowski's 1960s writings about the relation between artwork and audience, adding to it a Debordian reflection on how installing such relationships could work in a liberating way in order to oppose global capitalism³. In 2005, Danish choreographer Mette Ingvartsen rhetorically redefined Rainer's *No Manifesto* into her own *Yes manifesto*: "Yes to investment of performer and spectator / Yes to expression / Yes to excess".⁴

With this re-embracement of the theatrical in visual arts as well as in dance, where does this leave the theatre? And more specifically, where does this leave the black box theatre – the idea of a modernist theatre, or of theatre as a blank space? On one hand we have an aesthetic

³ This is the precise nature of the contemporary art exhibition in the arena of representational commerce: it creates free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the "communication zones" that are imposed upon us. (Bourriaud, Nicolas 2002: *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, .p.16)

⁴ <http://metteingvartsen.net/2011/09/50-50/>

field with practices that are very similar in visual art, dance and contemporary theatre. On the other hand we have critical discourses and institutions that insist on keeping them apart.

In order to fully understand the concept of theatre as it works within a contemporary art institution such as Black Box Teater today, it is necessary to go back to the Black Mountain College, and to the experiments done by David Tudor, Mary Caroline Richards, Robert Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham John Cage and others upon their collective reading of Antonin Artaud's "Le théâtre et son Double". Inspired by this work, who had been immensely influential in France, the Black Mountain group started making what they called *theatre pieces*. In order to retrospectively discern this practice from theatre as it was generally perceived in mid-century America, one of the college students, Alan Kaprow, re-dubbed the Black Mountain group's theatre pieces as "happenings", putting stronger emphasis on their connection to expressionist painting⁵, and thereby establishing this new form thoroughly within the discourse of visual art. Now, what was specifically "theatrical" in these happenings? Was it their relationalism? Was it the relationship between spectator and actor? Or was it their particular distribution of time that has led certain practitioners and theoreticians within our field to call for a discourse of "time based art"? Quite on the contrary, I believe that John Cage and the Black Mountain group were looking for was a different kind of theatricality, a theatricality that was not about relation, but about transcendence. Their theatre pieces were not about what took place between spectator and actor but about what took place when sounds, movements and actions clash, what could not be expected, what was not reducible to any artwork or art form – what could not be grasped. In the spring of 2005, La Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris hosted a retrospective exhibiton of Rirkrit Tiravanijas work, entitled *Tomorrow is another fine day*. A recurring reference in Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, Tiravanija had risen to fame in the 1990s with artworks that were primarily social situations, often involving preparation and consumption of food. Inside the museum there was nothing. Only the titles of his works aptly placed

⁵ Allan Kaprow (1958/1993): "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock."

around the exhibition space, two guards and a guide explaining to me that the essence of Tiravanija's art was the social interaction that took place between herself and me. There was not much going on however, so if this were to be true, Tiravanija would be a much lesser artist than what he is. What I found there was disappearance and withdrawal. The emptiness of these rooms is what I would define as theatre, it is what I constantly look for and it is what I see happening now. And I look for it everywhere – in theatre, in dance or in the visual arts. This is why I try not to discern too much between these different practices. And this is why I insist on using the term "theatre" to describe them. Nevertheless: perhaps it was when the visual arts began to embrace the theatricality they had denounced that theatre began to withdraw from it. Perhaps it was when the visual arts embraced the social relation that the theatre returned to metaphysics. Or perhaps it had done so all along. "So many works are trying to keep you busy these days", choreographer Marten Spangberg told me after the premiere of his seminal work "La Substance, but in English" at MoMa Ps1 in January 2014. "I wanted to create a work that kept itself busy" – And by keeping itself busy, the work left a space open for contemplation – a space where the spectator was left to his own devices. This is theatre to me. And that it was a dance performance at a visual arts institution is just proving my point.

When Peter Brook, theatre director and author of "The Empty Space" (1968) introduced Grotowski's *Akropolis* to American television viewers, he said: "this has nothing to do with communication". If what takes place between spectator and actor has nothing to do with communication, what is it that takes place? Perhaps it is disappearance, withdrawal, and emptiness. Perhaps the theatre is just this – a place to withdraw and disappear. Perhaps we should read Brook anew – perhaps the empty space is not to a space to be filled. Perhaps it was precisely its emptiness that drew Brook to it in the first place.

To return to the beginning, I think it is its opacity, the fact that it goes on at a non-site that makes theatre interesting in an age of transparency. This is why I will continue working with a notion of a non-site, a blank slate, an empty space – a black box.

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INTRO-CURATING (IN) THE TRANSNATIONAL NORDIC TIME ZONES CONFERENCE AT HØVIKODDEN

SVEN ÅGE BIRKELAND¹

Abstract

This text claims love, doubts and political strategies within the stage arts. It is a personal statement of being a curator in the performing arts today. Analyzing both the influence and the indifference of Bergen's visual art world, the article considers international trends as well as the difference between an art audience committed to performance art and a theater/dance audience committed to the performing arts.

Keywords: Future is now, curating, the political turn, documentary strategies.

BIT Teatergarasjen co-produce and present Norwegian and international performing arts. We emphasise projects that stimulate international collaboration and work that transcends artistic genres. The theatre is now nomadic and operates from different venues around town while waiting for a new theatre to be built* The old fantastic venue, a former tiles storage, was demolished summer 2008 – *planned opening of the new Teatergarasjen: Spring 2020.*

BIT Teatergarasjen is based in Bergen, Norway and adress audiences locally, nationally and internationally. BIT Teatergarasjen is co-producing and presenting works whitin a regular season program and also runs 2 biennial festivals, Oktoberdans (main focus dance, but the program is often based on hybrid forms) and Meteor (main focus theatre and performance art, but often carrying whatever moves us...).

¹ Theatre curator and artistic director at BIT Teatergarasjen, Bergen. Email: <sven@bit-teatergarasjen.no>.

A main curatorial idea could be formulated as... being a contributor to build artists – and their work/carrieres over time. Meaning; I often look for young and/or emerging artist where our contribution could mean a (real) difference. We are – in other words and still after 30 years in this business – a kind of advanced laboratory for contemporary art. This also means that we initiate and do other relevant activities addressing contextualization in general and continuously keep working on knowledge production. In other words; make broader grounds for understanding art (via post performance talks, pre-lectures, seminars, workshops, publications, etc), its different functions, politics and society in general as well as building up a toolbox for sharing with the rest of the field.

I have been around in this curational business for some years and at least the last 20 years I have questioned, or let me rephrase myself; every day I have doubted my integrity, motives and skills... and I still do... and will continue doing so... But at the end of the day it's quite clear. The reason for waking up every morning is that I have a dubious love affair with the field. I love the diverse and explosive potential it carries, its promises, even some of its values... and the excitement! And I actually believe we can contribute to make the world a better place... I believe – hopefully I'm not alone – in the power of this love, in the theatre, and paradoxly enough this love and trust is based on a big dozes of sceptizisme and doubt, and more than a handfull of questions not asked yet.... I cannot go deeper into it without being very personal, but let me try to adress an aspect I find intreaging, independent of me being based in peaceful, rich, off-white North: The political implication we hardly reflect upon. Is it possible to claim love and act politicly?

In recent years artists in the field of theatre, dance and performance have begun to re-claim an active role in social, environmental and other political developments – a role that performing arts more or less had given up since the early nineties: We could actually say that democracy – as art – met the same wall, maybe it could be formulated as a crisis of representation? Without diving further into it, one of the results were a shift to more concept- and process oriented work, which also led to more self reflection as well as more awareness about own means and the internal conditions of the medium itself. But this also brought a tendency of clear distance to concrete political and social involvement: it created a practice of self-content, some claim.

The political turn in the performing arts in more recent years can be read as an attempt to regain lost territory – after all: like no other medium theatre has always been an experimentation space for society: Either as a mirror to reflect itself, or – as Brecht put it – as a hammer to shape it. This has led to an increase of direct thematic approaches, towards works that try to deal concretely with social and political issues. Participatory art, documentary theatre and a large field of overlapping projects, are the most visible trends in this try to get a grip on a fastly changing world surrounding us.

How can art, how can artists play a role in contemporary politics? How can theatre engage with social and political issues – without compromising neither art nor politics? What kind of knowledge, what impact can art generate that activism and theory alone cannot? Should art it be useful? What are possible processes and methods of political theatre today?

These and other questions are central and are addressed within the House on Fire-network, a network consisting of 10 independent theatres and festivals from 10 different European countries (amongst them BIT Teatergarasjen). Co-productions, workshops, seminars, books... It's a beginning of a talk, it's feeding a discourse, it's knowledge production, – it's not the end; it's a tool for the future. Because... we actually love this field and it's potential for change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sven Åge Birkeland is the artistic and managing director of Norway's oldest and most prestigious international theatre, BIT Teatergarasjen www.bit-teatergarasjen.no, the dance biennial Oktoberdans www.oktoberdans.no and the theatre biennial Meteor. Birkeland also curates art programs for festivals, theatres, museums and galleries in Norway and abroad. Birkeland lives and works from his base in Bergen, Norway. Before working within the art field he did studies at the University of Stavanger and the University of Bergen.

**ABOUT LOOKING BACK HOPING TO FIND SOMETHING YOU CAN
EXPLAIN PERFORMANCE BY, AND LOOKING FORWARDLY
HOPING TO FIND SOMETHING YOU CANNOT EXPLAIN IT BY**

KURT JOHANNESSEN¹

Abstract

This is a reflection on how to become a performance artist and about which processes the artist was necessary to get there. The artist also gives his definition of performance art and what it is constituted by aesthetically, or which are the criteria of this art form.

Keywords: Performance art, criteria, processes.

I started my work in the field of performance art in 1982. The interest in doing performance emerged from the wish to be in an artistic process. The process itself fascinated me – to make the art, to be part of an artistic process, to be the process. Performance art was then the step forward which was evident to me to undertake. In the 1980s, there were few people in Norway working in the field of performance art.

The audience I got for my work, would ask me many questions about what performance really was about. In the mid 1980s I even started teaching performance, so gradually a need appeared to be able to explain what it was about, and in what way it was different to theatrical performance or theatre. I expanded on this by setting up some criteria:

1. That mainly people based in the visual art would compose and perform.
2. Performance is mostly based in visual qualities (as different to dialogic based or dramatic theatre).

¹ Kurt Johannessen is a performance artist. Email: Kurt Johannessen <kurt@zeth.no>.

3. Performance is here and now, and in the space itself where it is being done (as different to an illusion based theatre pretending to tell something going on in a space where illusion is given, like telling about Napoleon in a theatre which as well could be situated in Sydney today).
4. Performance has not necessarily a classical dramaturgical composition, like a narrative with a beginning and an ending.
5. Performance is different to theatrical performance in the way it is being presented or performed.

I was not myself preoccupied with these criteria. I knew I worked on performance art, and that was sufficient to me. It was the audience/students around me that needed explanations.

Before I entered the art academy as a student, football was my great passion. I was actively playing it although in a very low division of competition. When I studied there was no more space for football to the attention of my mind. Not until many years later football would return to my life. I little by little understood how football returned into my life. It means that I subsequently understood that football and performance had something in common, and that was in the sense of football requiring a similar concentration of the mental as of the body. It was about the ability to be present in a situation, in present time, and according to rules and how the space worked... I understood that the interest I had taken in football meant a lot to me. It was decisive to my wish to work with performance art. To my mind, 10 years passed by before I came to a full understanding of my decisions taken in the 1980s. Understanding might sometimes be an extremely slow process.

I always was occupied by being in art, either in performance, drawing or writing texts. To be in it, to exist in it. This state of being produce knowledge. Knowledge is a by-product of being present. After having been in it, understanding enter, nevertheless, as understanding is perceived and produced by the body, it develops in contrast to a slower understanding by the mind. It might not take 10 years to obtain this understanding, but understanding through or by the mind always comes later. Then you can describe it by words. I would say: that was how it approximately worked out for me.

I have slowly understood the contents of my work. Understanding comes gradually and automatically. This kind of comprehension is at the core of my artistic work. Intellectual understanding is an important by-product, That automatically becomes one's ally as long as he is part of the artistic process itself.

Working as an artist I look both backwards and forwards at the same time – Which means both understanding and not understanding. Not understanding is most important. Sometimes actions are being performed involving thoughts which hardly are a part of the past. Then you move almost only forwards. You then enter a new space. Such experiences are to be compared with gold in the sense of being a reward of the artistic process, and surely also influencing the artistic process as such. Not knowing is better than knowing in such moments.

Those who think that they need to know everything, those have not understood much.

(Translated from Norwegian into English by the editor.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kurt Johannessen (born 1960) is a Norwegian artist mostly known by his work on performance art since 1985. He is educated at the Western Norwegian Art Academy, Listahàskoli Islands (The Icelandic Art Academy) and Slade School of Fine Art. He received the Art Price of the Bergen Municipality in 2005.

INTERMEDIALITY AND MEMORY IN THE TOWER BLOCK – POST MORTEM PROJECT

ANDREAS BERGSLAND, BARBRO RØNNING¹

Abstract

This article discusses aspects of intermedial experiencing of the site-specific intermedial performance The Tower Block – Post Mortem and the preceding process of generating material for the performance through gathering and sharing memories from The Tower Block. The authors describe the gathering of memory material on the project's own blog, and how this process highlighted both properties of networked media and the phenomenology of remembrance. Subsequently, they discuss three different aspects of the performance, and how each of them relates to important issues in the discourse on intermediality in performance culture: 1) Intermedial elements in performance and their play with spatiality, temporality and their relationship to processes of remembrance; 2) Ritual and the transformative aesthetic of the performance and how it relates to the authenticity, and to interrelationships of the actual and the virtual; 3) Resonance and tension in trans-medial metaphors used in the performance.

Keywords: site-specific performance, audience participation, memories, large-scale multimedia, ritual, metaphors.

Introduction

The Tower Block was the main building of the central hospital in Norway's fourth largest city, Trondheim, and for many years, it was one of the tallest buildings in the city. When this building with such a prominence in the cityscape was demolished during a period of eleven

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months between 2010 and 2011, this started a process of reflection around what this building had meant too many of the people using it over the years. Sure, it was a place with a clearly defined function – to fix people’s medical problems. Nevertheless, most citizens of Trondheim had their share of personal experiences from the building – experiences that were often highly charged with emotion and in many cases of an existential nature. For the second author, the loss of her parents during a few months, both after longer periods of hospitalization in The Tower Block, awoke a consciousness of how the Tower Block constituted an important personally and emotionally charged component of the farewell and sorrow processes. Taking this realization to a general level, she realized how The Tower Block, a building that most people in the city considered as an ugly piece of brutalist architecture in crude contrast with the classic beauty of the city’s Nidaros Cathedral, could be seen as an “emotional landmark” in the city, standing as a symbol of the countless births, deaths, crises and healing processes that had taken place there. The second author’s personal experiences subsequently matured into the artistic idea of creating a performance at the demolition site built around people’s memories from The Tower Block.

In this article, we will discuss aspects of experiencing of the site-specific intermedial performance that resulted from this artistic idea: *The Tower Block - Post Mortem* (TBPM). In the first part of the article we will focus on the initial phase of the project that consisted in gathering memories from the citizens of Trondheim on a blog, and how this process highlighted both properties of networked media and the phenomenology of remembrance. In the second part we would like to highlight three different aspects of the performance, and how each of them relates to important issues in the discourse on intermediality in performance culture: 1) Intermedial elements in performance and their play with spatiality, temporality and their relationship to processes of remembrance; 2) Ritual and the transformative aesthetic of the performance and how it relates to the authenticity, and to interrelationships of the actual and the virtual; 3) Resonance and tension in trans-medial metaphors used in the performance.

Networked Communities in the Memory Blog

When the second author conceptualized the TBPM project in 2010 it was based on an ethos developed through her work as an artist and theatre scholar in the 1980s and early 90s within community arts practice.² The initial phase of this project focused on gathering the memories of the citizens of the city and the region from The Tower Block, and this was intended to make up the content around which the final part, a site-specific performance event, could be developed. Hence, the project was conceived as a form of *participatory art* with elements from *applied theatre* (Bishop 2012; Prentki and Preston 2013). A guiding idea for the second author when she conceptualized the project was that bringing personal memories to the fore by telling them, writing them or expressing them in other ways – especially ones highly charged with emotionality and existential meanings – would have an effect on how people related to the building, to each other and to the idea that the “death” of the building deserved to be marked and commemorated in a collective act. When Rønning put together the project team it was an important point that all of them each wrote down a personal memory from The Tower Block, including the authors; Rønning, whose role was project leader, dramaturge and director and Bergsland, who worked as sound designer, composer and project-team member.³ This act created in all of us a strong personal connection to the project, perhaps more than what is usually the case for “hired workers” in artistic projects.

In the same way that writing personal memories created a relationship to The Tower Block for the project group, we hoped that by writing and sharing their memories, the city’s and region’s citizens

² As Rønning 2016 points out, community based aspects of cultural practice from the bottom-up have a long tradition in the democratic cultural policy in Norway, with central keywords as cultural identity, non-hierarchical collaborative models and participatory action methods. She also contextualises the TBM project by pointing to the tradition of people’s theatre, from Roman Rolland up to today’s participatory theatre practices. Active audience inclusion and agency, and creating a theatre event with a common emotional and political purpose, is at the centre of this way of thinking.

³ The project team members are presented at <http://hoyblokka.no/eng.php>.

would experience a connection to the core ideas of the project on a personal and emotional level as well as actively engage and participate in the project. To facilitate inscription as well as sharing and commenting memories we used a specially designed web site shaped like a blog or internet forum where users could share personal memories as text, video and/or sound, optionally accompanied by images. In accordance with most blog designs, each memory could also be given comments by any other user.

To make the memory blog known to the relevant group of people, it was promoted in regional TV, radio and newspapers, the hospital's own intranet news feed, and on the project's Facebook page. And, from the publication of the blog in September 2010 and until late January 2011 when the performance event took place, almost 200 entries were posted.⁴ Before we go into issues of content of meaning for these posts, we would like to reflect on our role as facilitators setting the stage for interactive engagement through the design of graphics, structure, function and accessibility of the blog.

Rather than choosing a standard blog design and functionality we wanted to establish a platform with its own distinctive features, nevertheless partly within the frames and conventions of the complex and extensive intermedial digital cultures of blogs and social media. Using a simplistic "retro" type of design and functionality, we wanted to give the users associations to retrospection, remembrance and perhaps also nostalgia fitting the theme of the blog. The home page featured a stylized blue Tower Block where each of the 233 windows were linked to an entry on the blog, and hovering the mouse over a window would show either the title or of a text entry or a preview of an image entry (see *figure 1*). The entry page was dominated by a field for entering text and buttons for attaching sound, image files or a YouTube link to a video. And importantly, when a memory was entered, a window would turn yellow, seemingly "lighting up" a room in the virtual blue building, thus producing a simple and obvious visual metaphor for life and activity.

⁴ The blog is still available online in its original form at www.hoyblokka.no/norsk.php. In addition, an English version of the blog, showing some of the memories in translation together with images and video from the performance is available at www.hoyblokka.no/eng.php.

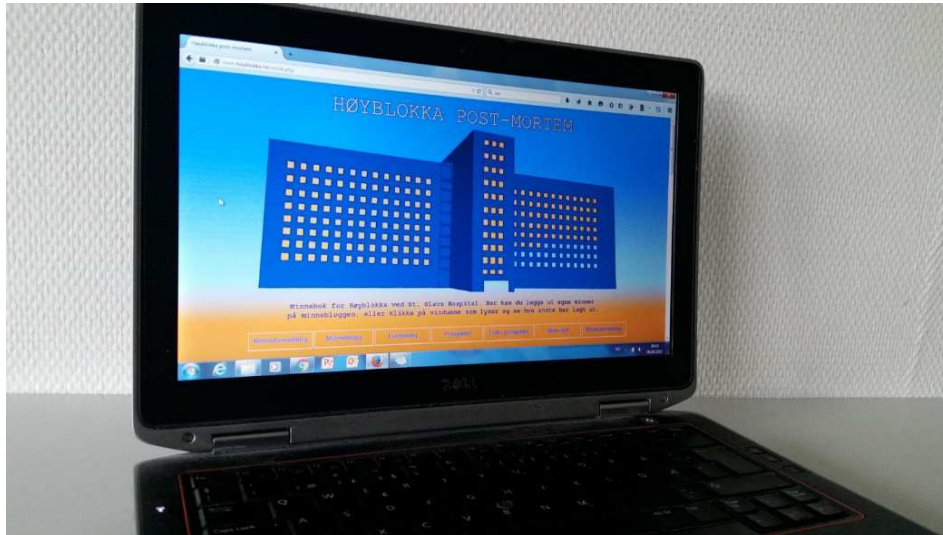


Fig. 1. The Tower Block website

Simultaneously, it created a sense of interactive navigation in a virtual environment, albeit perhaps in a relatively abstract sense (cf. Klich and Scheer 2012, ch.8). All in all, the “datedness” in stylization and design of the web interface particularly afforded a focus on the interface itself, and thereby to some degree displaying traits of what Bolter and Grusin (2000) have labelled *hypermediacy* – something that “makes us aware of the medium [and] reminds us of our desire for immediacy” (34).

Despite the somewhat hypermedial surface, we hoped that the users’ experience of the blog would be more dominated by the logic of its conceptual opposite, *immediacy* – “the belief in some necessary contact between the medium and what it represents” (31). And eventually, the general impression was that the entries on the blog were not so much driven by platform-specific concerns and conventions than for example Facebook and Twitter, where short texts are favored/allowed and where certain types of entries are more strongly encouraged through “likes” and “re-tweets” and therefore tend to dominate the platform. If any, the impression was that of considerable variation with strong individual flavors, but with a seemingly weaker sense of projecting and performing identities compared to mainstream social media – maybe because there was simply no user “profile” to worry about. Overall, we could observe

a greater reliance on traditional verbal story-telling than for example Facebook and Twitter, and we also found that the entries were longer than the typical Facebook status and tweet, but still significantly shorter and less elaborate than a conventional blog post.⁵ The very small scale of the networked community, the relatively low number of entries, the inherent emphasis on past events rather than present ones, and the “old school” aesthetic and functionality (no live feed of events) may all explain the seemingly mild platform- or media-specific effects we noted on the blog. In our experience, the effects of the blog lay less in its design and its other surface properties, and more in what was related to questions of emotionality and community, something we will discuss in the following sections.

At least in terms of structure and functionality, our intention with the blog was to tap into the culture of expressiveness, sharing and intimacy characteristic of social media and the blogosphere. This was also a way of bypassing the relatively restricted norms of social display of emotions in Norway, since the range of accepted emotional expressions in social media and the blogosphere seems to be less restrictive and allows for more intimacy than elsewhere in society.⁶ There are several aspects of the seemingly sterile computer-to-computer interaction that can open up for greater emotional openness and intimacy.

First of all, the computer as an all-purpose interactive and intermedial platform dominantly affords solitary interaction since it generally receives input (mouse, keyboard) and produces output (screen, small speakers) configured to suit one single user at a time per computer.⁷ Thus, the computer is largely a one-person medium, and just like the typewriter, the letter and the book, it will generally minimize social interaction taking place *in front of* media interfaces while focusing and heightening the interaction that is taking place *through* the media interfaces. This latter form of interaction will usually imply spatial

⁵ See <http://www.copypress.com/blog/4-statistics-every-blogger-should-know-about-content-word-count/> (retrieved 12.12.2014).

⁶ The restrictions in emotional display in Norwegian culture has been made into a pertinent caricature by Julien S. Bourelle in his *The Social Guidebook to Norway* (Bourelle 2014).

⁷ This is reflected in the term *Personal Computer* and in the historical Apple campaign using the slogan: “one person, one computer” (*Newsweek* nov./dec. 1984 cited in Jensen 1993, 342).

and/or temporal distancing depending on the nature of the software and the interfaces in use.⁸ In addition, different software and interfaces will introduce media specific transformations and modifications that will affect the nature of the interaction and the engagement of the user. While this naturally will inhibit and shape the social aspects of the interchange, it will also potentially increase the expressive control compared to face-to-face communication. Whereas facial expressions and body language can involuntarily give away emotions and expressive intent, the non-real-time nature of posting on a blog – nobody monitors what you express in real-time and nobody awaits your immediate response – will give a user plenty of time to sculpt his/her expression and to decide the degree of emotional investment and display, at least until the “submit” button is pressed.

Secondly, in many types of social interchange on the web, users can decide the degree to which their virtual identities (avatars, aliases) are linked to their biographical persons. In the right conditions this can make the users’ interaction in the virtual environments less restricted, and was one reason why we chose to allow anonymous and partly anonymous (e.g. first name only) entries in our blog⁹. Such mechanisms have also been revealed by Christopherson (2007), who found that internet anonymity can enable individuals to exert boundary control upon other’s access to one’s self and to be without fear of being identified and socially evaluated. Thus, our blog prepared a social ground that could be felt socially safer and less demanding than real-life interaction, and one can see how despite the distancing of computer-mediated communication it can allow for the heightened intimacy we were aiming for. In this case, Bay-Cheng’s (2010) point about virtuality seems appropriate: “[...] virtuality suggests a distance from – as well as an engagement with – the actual, material, and physical world, real life (142).

⁸ There are, of course, several exceptions to this tendency, e.g. in communicating via Skype, live chat, IRC, watching live streaming of events, etc.

⁹ However, one could also be worried about the negative aspects that anonymity could afford, such as hateful and inappropriate expressions, which the lack of social regulation mechanisms could lead to (Christopherson). Consequently, we chose to moderate our blog, even if negative or hateful expression eventually turned out never to be a problem.

While both design, structure and functionality were important factors in setting the stage for the gathering of memories invested with personal engagement and emotional depth, we still believed that the most important thing for us to do as facilitators was to establish the theme and the tone of the digital exchange on the blog. This approach acknowledged the fact that a great portion of online presence consists in so-called 'lurking', i.e. monitoring the contributions of others, something which Crawford (2009) suggests is an embedded part of networked engagement and a necessary corollary of having an online 'voice'. On those grounds, we chose to publish the blog with a set of 10-12 pre-produced posts – a few of these were from project team members, others were from people we invited – using a variety of media: text in the form of poems, short and long narratives, images, videos, some even with an artistic experimental character. Thus, we intended to give any visitors an idea of the wide range of expressions that could be posted on the memory blog. In terms of content and expressivity, however, there was less variation in the pre-produced material, in that we chose to focus on memories with strong emotional and existential qualities. We hoped that this could contribute in constituting the tone of voice in those "lurking" on our site, and that this would make it easier to open up intimate emotional landscapes. And, as we hoped, the memory blog seemed to open up a space for highly intimate and personal experiences, often portraying contributors or their close relatives in fragile, exposed or vulnerable states, either emotionally, bodily or both. For instance, one man wrote about the removal of his prostate gland, and how it involved situations where he felt that his manhood, bodily and mentally, was seriously threatened. In another entry, a woman told the story of when she woke up in the middle of her appendix surgery, feeling and hearing the doctors working, but not being able to speak or move a muscle. A third entry recounts the sudden shock and pain of seeing a close friend in a coma and hooked up to a respirator after a sudden cerebral hemorrhage. These and similar stories created a strong sense of respect and empathy in the project group, and contributed to a heightened awareness of the sensitive aspects of many memories and a feeling that this had to be reflected in the way in which such memories could be a part of the dramaturgy of the performance – a *dramaturgy of vulnerability*.

A crucial aspect of the memory gathering phase of the project seemed to be that it initiated processes that fed back on themselves: Blogposts could generate both comments¹⁰ and new posts on the blog, new memories linking up to similar or different ones by association or contrast. The project group took an active part in reinforcing these feedback loops by authoring new posts and commenting old ones. In addition, we were continuously expanding feedback loops beyond the blog by remediating parts of it on our Facebook page, the hospital's and the local university's intranet sites, the local press and the regional broadcasting. Interestingly, we were able to monitor not only the blog entries and comments, but also the number of hits on each individual memory post. For instance, we could see how certain memories created momentary peaks of traffic, like the one about a grouse crashing fatally through one of the top floor windows, which had 117 readers in one day. Thus, some of the memories seemed to form rhizomatic nodes in the network of blog entries, generating surges of activation.

One important aspect of these feedback loops is that they entailed a sense of *community* for the participants. This might have originated in a feeling of being "together" in the same virtual Tower Block with the different windows lighting up as new memories "moved in". Thus, the metaphor of the virtual Tower Block as a "place" where memories, and thus by extension people, were co-localized, by definition constituted a form of community. The fact that the blog posts were all related to the actual Tower Block inflicted them with a common perspective and focus, something which extended this community beyond the virtual: The memories from The Tower Block were also something that people could discuss and feel related to in their physical lifeworlds and in face-to-face communication. This was indeed something the project group experienced when talking to people that had openly shared memories on the blog.

Another issue that might have reinforced a sense of community was that the blog inflicted all its contributors with the same participatory status: There were no features that highlighted or in other

¹⁰ Enabling comments to the blog posts was a natural choice, and of course one that was to a large extent inherent to the blog medium.

ways promoted certain memories before others.¹¹ The project group's own written memories were placed in between all the others thus giving them the same status and hoping to promote the idea of a single community without privileged positions.¹² Thus, in contrast to traditional art and theatre practices, the "audience" was hereby repositioned as co-producers or active participants (Bishop 2012, 2). Just as important for the sense of community, perhaps, was that the act of remembering, shaping a memory and sharing it in a common virtual space created a common ground on a deeper and more personal level. When thinking of all the memories expressing pain, loss, sorrow and feelings of being exposed or vulnerable, one can easily imagine that by sharing a memory with others in similar situations, people could experience consolation and comfort in feeling that one is not alone. And, we could indeed observe that there were blog posts and post comments showing how people experienced the act of remembering and/or sharing as something positive. Lastly, the redefinition of the meanings of The Tower Block and the common involvement in a process leading to the performance event announced on the blog were also contributing to the sense of community. We will go into more detail about these issues below.

All in all, we have seen how the memory blog of TBPM displayed many of the features of *networking* through intermediality as Wagner and Ernst (2010) have described it: It invited participation ("lurking" as well as sharing), initiated feedback loops, and contributed to a sense of community – of contribution, sharing and interaction (175). As these authors note, networking calls for a conceptual shift from rather static ideas of time, space and subjectivity toward dynamic ideas of formation of process (176). And it is exactly the dynamic, processual and performative nature of both subjective identities and the "places" they inhabit that we would like to address in the following section with a particular focus on the role memories can have in this process.

¹¹ This is of course contrary to the way many of the social media operate, for instance by ranking, ordering or selecting posts based on e.g. "likes", "re-tweets" or "hits".

¹² In theory, having the power to remove unwanted posts and comments gave the project leader a more privileged role than other participants. In practice, however, no posts or comments were excluded.

Transforming Meanings, Aestheticization and Politics

Along with the gathering of memories on the blog ran a transformational process of redefining the meaning of The Tower Block for the region's citizens. From being first and foremost a functional building with a negatively charged brutalist architecture it was gradually re-constituted through the project period into a site of meaningfulness and relevance, both personally, socially and aesthetically. This was something intended by us as facilitators from the outset: In project descriptions, both publically and those used to apply for funding, in newspaper chronicles, interviews with local media and in our Facebook page we were persistently referring to The Tower Block as an *emotional landmark*, thus explicitly initiating the process of redefining the meaning of the building.

Through the memory-gathering phase just discussed, with its numerous posts displaying a high degree of emotionality and intimacy, this redefinition became strongly reinforced. This process concretized some of the insights of social and cultural geography, namely that memories often form a central component in how we as humans relate to places; places can evoke memories when we return to them and memories are often crucial components in how we construct places in our minds (Casey 1996, 26ff). Moreover, as Osborne (2001) argues, such a process is highly interactive, involving places and people that continuously define and re-define each other in a performative process. This also involves *identity*, both on the social (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004) and personal levels (Crossley 2002), meaning that a change in the perception of a place can reflect back on both an individual and the community he/she is a part of. In our case, that could imply that telling or writing a memory would affect not only our own and others' conception of The Tower Block, but potentially also our conception of ourselves by incorporating it in the set of life stories that constitute who we are. As Crites sharply formulates it: "A self without a story contracts into the thinness of its personal pronoun"¹³. Finally, as Bondi, Davidson and Smith (2007) emphasize, *emotions* can play a key role in relating people to places. E.g. when we remember a certain place, it can evoke

¹³ Crites, cited in Crossley 2002.

the same emotions as we felt when we were there once before, so that memory, emotion and place converge into one entity. Thus, a sad or painful memory from being hospitalized in The Tower Block might be metonymically projected onto the building as a whole and thus define our relationship to it.

Through personal contact with many people writing on the blog, we got a clear impression that the act of giving shape to their memories, e.g. by writing or telling them, was highly performative and transformational, changing the way people thought, felt and communicated about the mental traces of the events, including where they took place. We experienced that the idea of The Tower Block as an emotional landmark very quickly resonated with many people's attitudes towards the building; that there was more to this building than mere function and external appearance, and its demolition was something that stirred them. By creating an atmosphere for empathetic interchange, support, respect and understanding through the memory blog, we as facilitators could make explicit and strengthen some of the feelings that the loss of this building evoked.

We like to think that the intermedial effects of the memory blog discussed above certainly also played a part in the transformational processes running through the preparatory phases of the project. Especially, we experienced that the particular networked and computer mediated aspect of *sharing* that the memory blog featured, promoting and projecting intimacy, intra- and intermedial feedback, added a therapeutic effect to the project. When thinking of all the memories expressing pain, loss, sorrow and feelings of being exposed or vulnerable, one can easily imagine that by sharing a memory with others in similar situations, people could experience consolation and comfort in feeling that one is not alone, and getting comments of understanding and/or empathy.¹⁴

The play between the physical building being gradually demolished and the virtual stylistic web representation of it "coming to life", with memories lighting up its windows, can also be seen as an intermedial effect. It was difficult, if not impossible, to consider the memories "inhabiting" the virtual rooms of the web Tower Block

¹⁴ Later, this was also an important component of the *ritual* element of the performance, which will be discussed further below.

without considering how the physical doubles of these rooms were simultaneously destroyed by demolition machines. Thus, the project set up a relationship between these two processes, with one constituting a positive anti-thesis to the other, and where the meaning of the virtual and actual were continuously affecting each other. To call this an effect of intermediality would require, however, that the demolition process was considered an artistic medium – a stage in which an integrated part of the performance took place. While the functional aspects of the demolition were certainly paramount, the project nevertheless clearly framed and redefined the demolition process as an integral part of the project with evident aesthetical value.

We began our work with the aestheticization of the demolition process already a few days after the hospital functions had been moved to the new building when we were allowed into the abandoned building. The emptiness of the building radically transformed it, changing both how the building looked and sounded inside. Visually, the acute absence of people accentuated the material and physical qualities of the building, with years of wear and tear becoming particularly evident. At the same time, the empty rooms evoked imagery of people and events that could have taken place there, especially where there were noticeable traces of people or activity – like a pair of shoes left on the floor or a note on the washing machine to keep it closed. Sonically, the absence of people and (most of the) furniture also drastically changed the soundscape of the hospital. Naturally, the buzz of voices and people in activity was absent, but perhaps the most striking was the accentuation of reverberation, with each utterance or footstep causing a long tail of it that you couldn't help noticing. This fact triggered us into producing a soundscape piece where Håkon, one of the project workers, presented the memory of his last meeting with his granddad in The Tower Block, sitting in a chair and telling it slowly to a sound recorder in the same room where it originally took place.¹⁵ When the memory blog was published a few months later, and most of the interior surface materials and infrastructure

¹⁵ The piece is entitled *Memories from an empty room* (Norwegian: *Minner fra et tomt rom*): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAf2we7acgE> (Accessed October 17, 2017). It is described and analysed in detail in Bergsland and Tiller (2013) and Bergsland (2016).

was removed, over twenty photographs from the recently abandoned hospital were posted along with the soundscape piece of Håkon. Even if these both types of expression got their aesthetical value through our active framing and mediation of parts or properties of the building, they nevertheless opened up for viewing the demolition process *in itself* as an integral part of the project and the performance.

This perspective was highly emphasized when the tearing down of the concrete structures began. The spectacle this generated almost invited itself into the project. Giant concrete chewing machines ate their way through the building, surrounded by clouds of dust and piles of debris, suggesting a mythological scene with atrocious dragons causing mayhem and destruction. Already after a few days of operation, we had published several photos of these machines in action, some of these color manipulated, to amplify the drama and mythological flavor (see *figure 2a*). A few weeks later the dragon-like appearance of the demolition machine had given the motif for the logo of the project (see *figure 2b*). The logo was put up on posters on the fences of the demolition site and printed on small flyers and handed out to people all over the city along with the web address of the memory blog. And with or without our help, the demolition process turned into a performance inextricably linked to and framed by the TBPM project, with many people stopping daily to watch the spectacle. Eventually, with the performance basically taking place right next to the semi-demolished building and piles of debris, and with one of the machines having a part in the performance, chewing off a bite of concrete in one of the final scenes, the aesthetical staging of the demolition process was complete. Thereby, the project's interplay between the physical and the virtual buildings was certainly a case of intermediality, playing out processes related to death and decay on one side, and life and creation on the other, against each other.

Considering how the TBPM project changed the conception of The Tower Block in the community through participation and aestheticization, it might be worth to briefly relate this to relevant theoretical discourses on politics and participatory art. In cultural geography, in which relationships between people and places are a central topic, there has been an interest in how commemoration to create or reinforce collective memories that support and strengthen themselves, e.g. through playing

on national identity (Osborne 2001, 8-9). Notably, governing elites often use monument- and museum-related activities to make or preserve historically inflicted urban landscapes “as a way to bolster a particular political order, and as a means to capital accumulation” (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, 350). In such cases, sites and rituals of commemoration are often freighted with underlying political issues. In our case, however, the project seemed more to challenge than to support existing economic and political structures. After all, our project implied that ordinary citizens, their experiences and memories were given a say when demolishing a building – not only bureaucrats, economists and entrepreneurs.



Fig. 2a. Demolition machine in action

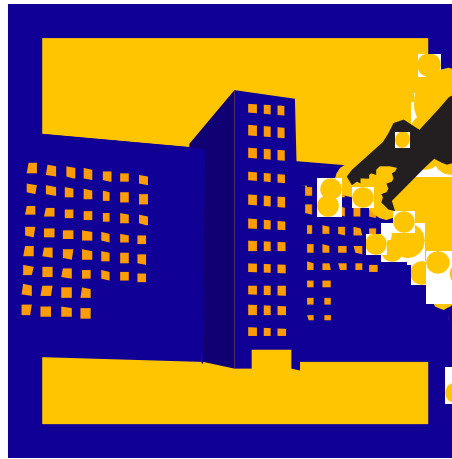


Fig. 2b. The Tower Block – Post Mortem logo

Taking this perspective of political opposition into consideration, Claire Bishop’s (2012) work on participatory art seems particularly relevant, presenting theories about a set of practices that clearly would embrace our project in that it “is often at pains to emphasize process over a definitive image, concept or object. It tends to value what is invisible: a group dynamic, a social situation, a change of energy, a raised consciousness” (6). In Bishop’s view, participation in art “rehumanizes a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production” and also indicates a critical distance towards the neoliberal world order (11-12). Bishop, in turn, draws partly on Rancière, who sees aesthetics as confluent with politics, since both deals

with both a sharing and a dividing of how the world is experienced and made sense of – Rancière’s famous notion of *partage du sensible* (distributing/dividing the sensible) captures this duality: “The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed” (Rancière 2004, 8). In our case, changing the way The Tower Block was conceived involved a certain way of experiencing or sensing that was distributed or shared in a community, and therefore was both political and aesthetical at the same time. While Bishop acknowledges that the weakness of this view is that all art, both progressive and reactionary, can be political, the coupling between aesthetics and politics seems to be appropriate for how we thought about and co-performed *participation* in the TBPM project.

As we have seen, the memory blog was from the beginning a part of the TBPM as participatory art and performance through transformation of meaning, aestheticization and politicization. Simultaneously, the memory blog produced material that subsequently could be selected, adapted and transformed into something that could be incorporated into the project’s performance event, which we now want to address in the remainder of this article.

*

After five months of collecting memories on the blog, the TBPM performance event took place in front of and amidst the remnants of the then partly demolished Tower Block on January 30, 2011. Approximately 1000 spectators viewed the forty-five minute long event involving a multitude of media and elements: 5 non-actors performing their own memories, a small acoustic band, a group of dancers dressed in surgeon clothing and head lights, one female singer, one sign language performer/translator, two powerful projectors showing images and videos, one of them on the remaining façade of The Tower Block, a multi-channel sound system playing back evocative sound compositions, real-time ambiences and sound effects, a powerful lighting system bathing the ruins in blue and orange, and finally, a monstrously big demolition machine in operation (see *figure 3*). Through the links with the previous

memory gathering process on the project's web site and the concrete skeleton being the only material remnant of the Tower Block at the time, the performance can be located close to many of the conceptual nodes that according to Bay-Cheng and colleagues are central in the discourse on intermediality: dynamic conceptions of spatiality and temporality; interchanges between the actual and the virtual using presentations and re-presentations with different degrees of presence, transparency and hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin 2000); and finally the expansion of the already established interactive relationship with the audience through new feedback loops (Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt and Lavender 2012, 185-6). Furthermore, some of the central metaphors of the performance highlight the interplay of different media and the media-specific re-shaping of these, so that we might label them *mediaphors*, with Pluta's term (Pluta 2010, 192). We will now look into these aspects in turn.

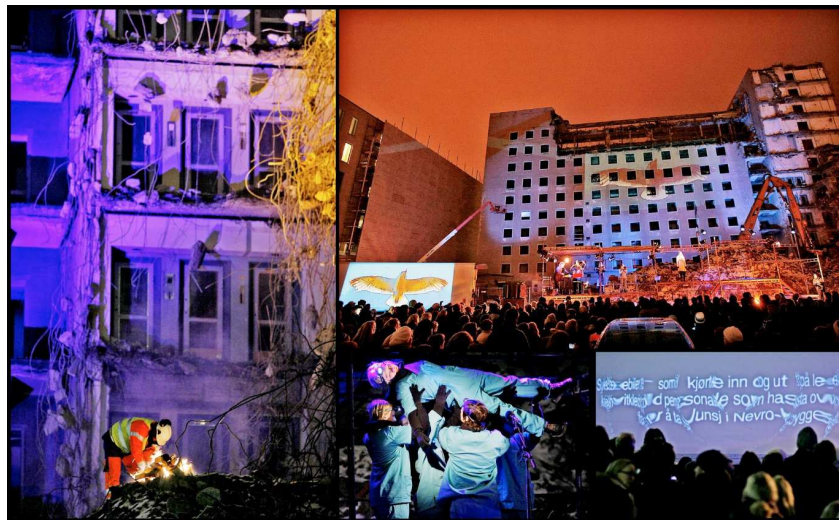


Fig. 3. Montage from The Tower Block – Post Mortem performance

Intermediality, Spatiality and Temporality

In this section, we would like to take a look at how many of the elements of the performance engaged in intermedial relationships particularly

playing on space and time, and discuss how this sets some of the same processes into play as remembrance and memorization, as discussed above.

In many ways, time and space are two central underlying themes in the TBPM performance, both explicitly and implicitly. While the materially as well as the experientially and socially defined Tower Block constituted a *spatial* focus point around which the performance event circled, the preceding memory gathering phase of the project discussed above, along with its subtitle “minneforestilling” (memory performance), clearly pointed toward the past and the passing of *time*. By closing off the performance with an especially composed hymn using the well-known biblical text *A Time for Everything* (Ecclesiastes 3), repeating the word “time” 15 times, the concept was explicitly thematized and emphasized in the performance.

The performance event also combined and superimposed several layers of time: First of all, certain elements were non-representational and very much belonged to the *here and now* of the performance, in particular the acoustic band with the singer, the sign language performer, the demolition machine and the five performers reading their own memories aloud in front of the audience. Secondly, the memory-gathering phase preceding the performance and constituting an implicit part of it, made up a layer of a relatively immediate past. This layer was also represented by the narrators’ temporal point-of-view in the textually represented and read memories (projected on the Tower Block wall and on the side wall of a big truck at the site). Thirdly, the *content* of the memories, along with the seemingly more objective pasts represented by photos, video and sound from The Tower Block’s days as functional hospital, represented a multitude of different pasts, more or less precisely defined in time, but all clearly further removed from the present than the second layer. Note how media can conflate temporalities or accentuate them through the play with different framings – e.g. in the black and white images and the narrow band voices that both signal age and temporal distance.

At the same time, these layers of time coalesced and were actualized by the physical presence of the remaining parts of The Tower Block: It was actually *here* that all this happened. Michael Mayerfeld Bell (1997) calls the sense of presence of who and what is no longer

physically (t)here the *ghosts of place*, and sees them as a ubiquitous aspect of the phenomenology of place (813). These ghosts and the time layers they represent thereby constitute a parallel to and simultaneously a temporal transposition of Walter Benjamin's "prism of places" into a "prism of time-places" (Benjamin, cited in Bay-Cheng et al. 92). Here, the concept of place is also shown to be complicated, in that one place, in our case one building, is really shown to be a multitude of places, with different scales and different extensions – from the smallest corner of a room to the whole hospital area – allowing for different perspectives (inside/outside) and even trajectories – since some of the memories involve movement.

The prismatic character of the performance was particularly highlighted by the differently mediated representations of time-place. For instance, historical pictures of the Tower Block when newly built were projected onto the façade of the now gutted building, giving an almost uncanny feeling of dressing up a corpse in children's garbs. At the same time, one could hear the amplified voice of Dagfinn Gilde, appearing to come from the building itself, so that one almost started to look for his *Gestalt* in the ruins of the Block while he told the story of when he was one of the very first patients in the hospital. All this was accompanied by the ticking of several clocks at different speeds and with different musical pitches. This section of the performance, along with several others of a similar kind, was carried primarily by pre-produced audio-visual material, with only the modest stage presence of the sign language performer. These sections were deliberately made relatively sparse and open so that the audience could have generous amounts of time and room to sense, imagine and reflect around what they saw and heard. For instance, any verbal elements in the images or sound compositions were presented at a very slow pace and accompanied by minimal amounts of new material, to create expressions with relatively low information density. Thus, we hoped to evoke the audience's own memories, which would then mingle with their sensations and experiences (see *figure 4*). Reports from audience members and reviews from the local paper informed us that this actually happened: "there was a buzz around from people having worked there for 30 years, had their hip operated there, lost [their] mother there" (Adresseavisen January 31st, 2011).

Hence, the different layers of time would constantly and playfully comment and feedback on each other in an intermedial exchange, while at the same time blurring the boundaries between the individual and the prismatically projected collective memory.

This glimpse of the temporal *beginning* of the building also implicitly accentuated its *ending* – clearly present as the structure's immediate past and future through the partially demolished concrete skeleton under constant threat of the demolition machine. Thus, the performance challenged the brutalist edifice's sense of permanence with the ephemerality of memories inverting in the process their temporal connotations. Here, it seemed the building would soon vanish while the memories lived on, both on the Internet site and in people's minds. This aspect was closely related to the ritualization that was a central dimension of the TBPM performance.

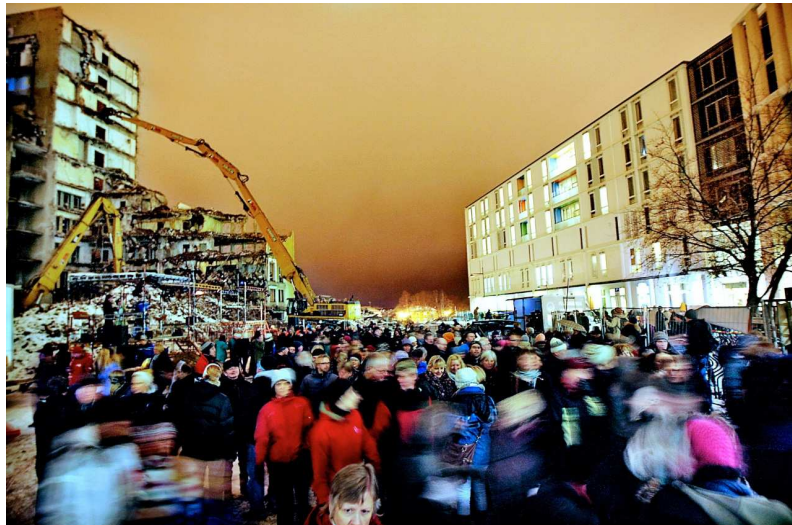


Fig. 4. View of audience and demolition machines in front of The Tower Block

Ritualization: Presence and Authenticity

Implicit in establishing The Tower Block as an emotional landmark in Trondheim through the memory blog, was the need to demolish the

building in a dignified and respectful manner through a ritual that marked a good bye and permitted it to be put to rest through collective commemorative acts. The good bye and the putting to rest were acts rooted in a sense of great authenticity, which worked *through* and *in unison with*, if not against the hypermediated workings of both the memory blog and the performance event. On the one hand, the ritual was a corollary of the need to establish the emotional depth of the whole demolition process that the local media covered only from a distance (e.g. there was a time-lapse camera telescoping the progress of the demolition process). On the other hand, the ritualistic aspects of the performance created an acute sense of presence with universal strands, through the active participants' solemn entrance to the site with torches and accompanying brass band, the fire in the ruins, the concluding hymn, the memory readers, and the demolition machine that took a few "bites" of the building structure at the end as a parallel to the symbolic throwing of dirt on the funeral casket. This convoluted sense of presence shared across the divide of time invited comparison with the distance implied in the projections and the sound compositions, whose clearly constructed character resulted in a low degree of medial transparency. For instance, the gapingly empty windows bled through the projections on the façade and were very hard to ignore. In contrast to the amplified voices of the memory readers, the voices heard in some of the sound compositions were also clearly processed, thus accentuating their recorded and mediated nature.

Staging the performance as a kind of ritualistic goodbye to The Tower Block established a special kind of *authentic* relationship with the audience. Firstly, the ritual in many ways became something that was performed *on behalf of* the region's citizens, meaning that the performance served a need or a function for them, namely that of *shutting down*, *making complete* and marking a *transformation*, functions often present in funeral rituals. In a sense, the audience's role could be compared to that of the congregation at a funeral; they were participants, but with no other obligations than to be present, and to co-feel and co-memorate. Secondly, the *as if* characters, the representations normally present in the staging of plays, were almost completely lacking in our case, perhaps with the notable exception of the dancers dressed up in surgeons'

clothes. The memory readers were there as themselves, performing their own memories. They wore outdoor winter clothing just as the rest of the audience, and in that way showed that they were really their equals, even if they were more active.¹⁶

Finally, the event's site-specific character also underlined the authenticity of the performance event, as it took place at this demolition site and not in a theatre, where the fixed institutional conventions would not be activated as strongly as in a theatre auditorium. Admittedly, there is a segregation between the active performers and the passive audience, but this is much less marked than in a conventional theatre performance.

Intermedial Metaphors

In the process of working out the TBPM project, the project team consisting of the dramaturge/director, a composer, two visual artists, a lighting designer, a priest, a researcher and an architect explored different concepts and guiding metaphors. One of the metaphors that became central was the *seagull*. In the earliest phases of the project we were made aware of how the seagull had special significations for the hospital, both as a part of its immediate natural environment and as a part of the hospital's interior aesthetic, each triggering opposite connotations. As for the latter, there were paintings of seagulls on many of the walls around the building, and even one in a subterranean tunnel beneath The Tower Block depicting a group of seagulls at sea. Judging by the way they were depicted and the context in which they were placed, the seagulls symbolized the freedom of flight, nature and beauty, often being a component a "snug" aesthetics, accompanied by artifacts signaling coziness, comfort and the relaxed social settings that had emerged at the hospital perhaps as a reaction to its cold and hard brutalist architecture and functionalist indoor environments. On the other hand, the seagulls represented the actuality of natural surroundings that were sometimes

¹⁶ Arntzen 2016 discuss the performance and calls this phenomenon a form of *new autenticity*.

harsh and relentless. For instance, we noticed how the health personnel on the top floors were highly conscious of the dangers of leaving food on the roof of the hospital, since there was a small seagull colony hatching there during the summer months. The birds could definitely interfere with and cause problems for the different human doings at the hospital, by stealing food, making an unbearable noise or becoming aggressive to protect their offspring. E.g. we learned through several of the memories on the blog that the seagulls' constant signaling calls, especially when they were protecting their small ones, were experienced as exhausting and noisy by recovering patients.

The seagulls' highly protective behavior towards their young ones created a metonymical link to another active metaphor of the hospital world, that of white, winged creatures standing for nurturing and care. To be more precise, the health personnel at the hospital, and maybe the nurses in their white coats in particular, were often being described as nursing and caring "angels" in many of the entries on the memory blog. The link between these caring, winged creatures was even lifted to a meta-level when we realized that The Tower Block had the shape of a seagull, with one central "body" and two "wings", thus making the shape of the building itself into a many faceted metaphor embracing everything from the heartfelt care to a humane aesthetics to soften a harsh and efficient environment, as well the material "body" of the hospital, with its own "nature", idiosyncrasies, and problems.

The strongest expressions of this metaphor in the performance event were certainly the visual morphs projected onto the façade of The Tower Block at the beginning and end. The first one showed a seagull with its wings spread out gradually turning into The Tower Block, whereas the second one showed the morph in reverse (see *figure 5*). The morph therefore metonymically linked the seagull to The Tower Block through processes of gradual transformation, highlighting both the material aspect of the metaphor (the "body") and the more symbolic ones ("flight", "freedom", "nature"). In this particular context, where a ritual marking the transitoriness of the building was taking place, and especially at the last transformation from Tower Block to seagull, the metaphor's angelical strains came into play. At that point, when the image of the "living" building projected onto the "dying" actual one

gradually took the shape of a bird in flight, it was hard not to read religious connotations into it – and at least take the image as an expression of a transition from the material to the immaterial. It could for instance be taken as a metaphorical expression of the (immaterial) memories' continuing existence while the building disappeared. This interpretation was also supported by the poster for the event showing a bunch of polaroid pictures with faces on them flying out from The Tower Block on white wings. While the winged creatures allude perhaps more to the individuals behind the many memories than to the seagulls, the analogy between these two metaphorical expressions and the way they link the material building with something immaterial was nevertheless present. The seagulls were also present in other parts of the performance, as in sound bites and more occasional images, although the less pregnant presentation of these occurrences made their metaphorical force weaker. For instance, throughout the performance one could hear squeaking seagulls seemingly flying around the building, and the realism of these sounds could easily lead one to mistaking them for real seagulls. When mixed with other sounds, many of them recognizable hospital sounds, they created a set of metaphorical stubs that would perhaps highlight the "nature" and "snug" aesthetics of the painted seagulls more than the care and angelical aspects of the nurses. Nevertheless, these sounds linked up to the larger metaphorical thread running through the project, as well as to the concrete manifestations of seagulls present in the building, and to the virtual manifestations on the memory blog in the form of memories about seagulls. Together they created a rich metaphoric set transferring meaning between different media, between actuality and virtuality, and between different phases of the TBPM project so that when a commemoration stone later was put down on Olav Kyrre's Square, the site where The Tower Block once stood, the stone depicted a Tower Block with wings like a seagull.

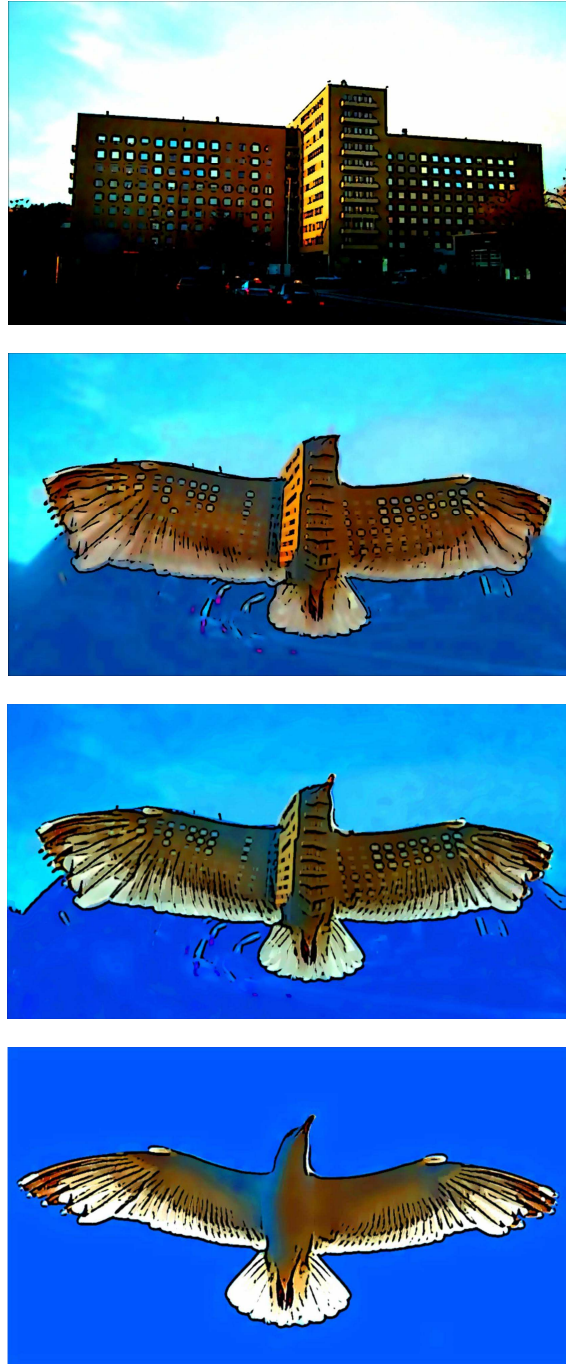


Fig. 5. Visual morphs from Tower Block to seagull

Conclusions

Based on the networked interactive engagement of a broad and largely non-theatre audience the TBPM project worked with interactions between individual memories and collective notions of place, and showed how these could be applied in a performance using what we have called *a dramaturgy of vulnerability*. The use of several different media with different degrees of presence/immediacy, the complex layering of spatiality and temporality, the interplay between actuality and virtuality, and the use of over-arching metaphors across media, highlighted the *intermediality* of the performance. With Kattenbelt's (2008) definition of *intermediality* in mind – “those co-relations between different media that result in a redefinition of the media that are influencing each other, which in turn leads to a fresh perception” (25) – we proposed that the *intermediality* in TBPM lets the audience and the actual world transcend the performance in addition to the different media applied there. In our case, all these constantly comment and re-define each other, affecting experience, memories and how they view themselves and the place that was The Tower Block.

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TRANSFORMING ART INSTITUTIONS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS EDUCATION IN A NORWEGIAN CONTEXT – HOW WE GOT INSPIRED AND HOW WE HAVE INFLUENCED THE SCENE

CAMILLA EEG-TVERBAKK¹

Abstract

The Norwegian Theatre Academy represents an innovative pedagogical platform for educating performing artists who develop new collaborate methods and innovative works. The school is influenced by the field of performing arts in Norway that has taken place in the independent field since the 1970s. These ongoing experiments reflect an international avant-garde history, and connect artists from different fields in collaborative staged practices. At NTA students learn to develop work with an understanding of how collaborative methods influence the aesthetics, where actors and scenographers often work without a director. The relations between body, space and objects are central aspects of exploration when composing material for the stage.

Keywords: theatre, performance, interdisciplinary pedagogy, installation art, stage arts.

Norwegian Theatre Academy (NTA) is an interdisciplinary performing arts education in scenography and acting. The teaching philosophy is closely linked to the avant-garde history of western time-based art. It is rooted in the Nordic independent theatre and dance scene developing throughout the 1980s and 1990s, which can be said to mirror what Hans-Thies Lehmann has identified as post dramatic theatre, although

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not limited to this concept. I will follow the historical trajectory focusing on the Norwegian context, presenting the ways in which NTA develops a pedagogy that draws on methods from various art practices, and how it is entangled with the professional field of interdisciplinary² works.

Students' Works

The site-specific theatre installation *War Brides/ Tyskerjenter* premiered in 2008 on the island Hovedøya in the Oslo fjord, where an internment camp for so-called 'tyskertøser' was situated after the Second World War. Norwegian women who had intimate relations with German soldiers during the occupation were labeled as 'Tyskertøs'. The work was a theatrical performance and exhibition presenting documents found in archives, installed in combination with live female bodies turned into objects for scientific research. This reflected the way women in the internment camp were treated and objectified as contagious, potentially insane and dangerous. The piece opens up a complex affective, architectural, and relational space where performers' and audience members' bodies, the historical site, and archive texts interact and resonate with each other. The concept was developed by Veronika Bökemann and Séverine Urwyler partly during their last year of study at NTA, and realized as a professional artwork after their graduation.



From the site specific theatre-installation
War Brides/Tyskerjenter (2008),
at Hovedøya/ Oslo created by Veronika
Bökemann and Séverine Urwyler. Photo:
John Hughes

² The term interdisciplinary can be discussed as performing arts is inherently interdisciplinary. Currently at NTA this term is debated in relation to terms like 'cross disciplinary' or 'transdisciplinary'. Is the contemporary performing art field considered 'interdisciplinary' in 2017, or has the term become superfluous?



From the site specific theatre-installation
War Brides/Tyskerjenter (2008),
at Hovedøya/ Oslo created by Veronika
Bökelmann and Séverine Urwyler.
Photo: John Hughes

Stop Being Poor was developed as an independent graduation piece by a group of BA students in acting and scenography during spring 2015. It is a piece that uses strategies of performance art and installation as much as music and dance. The group consisting of Anders Firing Aardal, Matias Askvik, David Jensen, Marthe Sofie Løkeland Eide, Ylva Owren, and Heiki Eero Riipinen created the concept, scenography, wrote, and directed collectively. The piece won the prize of best young direction at Thalia Theatre in Hamburg after their graduation in 2015 and toured Europe in 2016. The company the students formed, By Proxy, is currently running a one-year artistic program at Momentum Theatre in Denmark.



From the performance *Stop Being Poor*,
created and performed by the
collective By Proxy (2015),
Photo: Krafft Angerer

I am using these two examples as a way to point towards the collective mode of creation and range of methods that are explored and developed by students at NTA, which reflect the way the curriculum and pedagogy has developed since its beginning in 1996.

The Education

Norwegian Theatre Academy (NTA) is a performing arts education offering a wide range of classes and workshops with pedagogues and artists from the fields of theatre, dance, visual art and performance, architecture, installation design, and other creative fields. An important focus is the meeting points between critical theory and practice, and between the arts and the social spheres. NTA offer a research-based education with guest teachers and artists from around the world offering workshops and lectures. There are two BA programmes, one in acting and one in scenography, and an MA program in Scenography. As the school is rounding its 20th anniversary in 2016, another MA program in performance is under development. This prospect MA program focus on questions of dramaturgy, ethics, and materiality. It draws on expertise from music composition, choreography, performance art, and theatre inviting candidates from all art fields to explore their work as performance in a cross-disciplinary context.

Students from our two departments work extensively together on different projects both independently and with international theatre directors, choreographers and artists from various fields through productions and laboratories. NTA always looks to question existing views and methodologies. Through its 20 years there has been an on going enquiry into what scenography and acting is and can become, and what learning about it may require for the future. This questioning of aesthetic norms and exploration of new and different working methods is how new forms may emerge, which NTA sees as one of its important functions in the Nordic educational landscape. The relatively peripheral geographical location of NTA, situated in the small town of Fredrikstad one hour south of the Norwegian capital Oslo, has allowed a certain

freedom of pedagogical experimentation, which over time has proved to form a sustainable platform and methodology in itself.

The education started as an education for puppet – and object theatre. This is a tradition, which draws strongly both on theatre, dance/movement/choreography as well as visual arts. However, in Norway puppet theatre is classified as children's theatre and is a very narrow field even within that genre. So in 2003, when NTA became part of the Østfold University College, the name changed from 'Akademi for figurteater' (Academy for figure theatre) to 'Akademi for scenekunst' (NTA). The word 'scenekunst' is important in the Norwegian context, because it already implies an interdisciplinary approach to the theatrical arts. It is a word commonly used in Norway referring to the activity that has taken place in the independent scene since the 1970s, highly represented from the 1980s in particular by Bergen International Theatre and Black Box Theatre in Oslo. It is a term that includes all art forms presented on a stage in front of a live audience, including hybrids, where the stage can be anywhere and any ground to stand on. It differs however, from performance art presented in galleries with a clear reference to visual arts although 'scenekunst' may very well take place in a gallery space. The English word 'live art' is narrower than 'scenekunst' because it refers to a specific field that somehow excludes theatre and dance. 'Scenekunst' is a broad concept pointing to the performing arts as an interdisciplinary field per se, it embraces classical forms of dance and theatre, and includes them into the field of staged art in general, thus also giving agency and equal emphasis to all hybrid and experimental forms drawing from and opposing to those classical forms. It is a non-hierarchical term, which I believe has been formative for the development of the Norwegian performing art scene and which has been important for the identity of NTA.

The peripheral position NTA has had geographically, but also in its forming years being considered the 'experimental' acting education in relation to the then only other acting education in Norway (The Oslo National School of Theatre), has given time and concentration to develop and strengthen its own unique approach. This has now proven itself to having become a strong platform mirroring an important development in the Norwegian arts scene since the 1980s: the independent, interdisciplinary,

and experimental scene currently moving into and affecting the large institutions. This artistic scene has developed and bloomed due to the environment being small and intimate combined with a relatively favourable state funded support system. It is characterized by its close collaboration and exchange between artists from various artistic disciplines resulting in numerous productions that have influenced our more traditional stages more than it is being credited for. It is the interdisciplinary field of 'scenekunst' that have brought Norwegian performing arts abroad, and many independent companies and projects has and are touring extensively internationally. It is the activity in this field that has opened the dialogue with an international performing arts scene and discourse. NTA has responded to this development through forming an English speaking education with 70% of the teaching offered given by international visiting artists and pedagogues. The independent scene has become a strong professionalized field outside the bigger institutions and buildings, and it is also this important field of artistic experimentation, which our planned interdisciplinary MA in performance will mirror and give agency by offering an educational platform.

Contemporary dance in Norway has been very important for the development of the whole independent scene. It took many years before there was any institution to present and develop contemporary dance work. Before Carte Blanche was established in Bergen in 1989 we only had the national ballet company at the Opera. Bergen International Theatre and Sven Åge Birkeland however, played a crucial role in introducing international work of both dance and theatre in Norway as well as promoting Norwegian independent work abroad. Dance has had to develop outside institutions and thus also exercised great freedom to experiment. For instance the first independent dance company in Norway, Høvik Ballett developed their work in a highly interdisciplinary environment during the 1970s and 80s. They were hosted by and resided at Henie Onstad Art Centre outside of Oslo, a gallery founded in 1968 and dedicated to visual arts, experimental music and performance. This landscape, already described by others, were important grounds on which NTA have found inspiration and a reason for being.

Teaching in an Interdisciplinary Art Field

NTA has developed a pedagogical approach, which is highly influenced by international movements in the staged arts and also by developments in the 'scenekunst' field in Norway specifically throughout the last twenty years. In its forming years NTA focussed on object oriented theatre related to the ways certain traditions of 'physical theatre' has been working with the relationship between objects and the body. This educational platform was a collaboration with DAMU in Prague and their department of alternative – and puppet theatre. In 2003 NTA found a new organisational structure under the auspice of the university college of Østfold and left its emphasis on puppet theatre, turning its attention toward space and visuals related to what is called 'visual theatre'. There are obvious links however, between visual theatre, object oriented theatre, physical theatre, and even dance. Through this development the scope was opened up to the international contemporary scene of visually based performance work at the time, especially referring to the work of Robert Wilson and Kirsten Dehlholm and her company Hotel Pro Forma, as well as dance theatre companies such as Pina Bausch company in Wuppertal and the British company DV8 to mention only a few.

From around 2007 critical theory was introduced as an important part of the study in addition to the practical subjects. This development can be traced back to the independent art scene internationally having become increasingly conceptual throughout the 1990s exploring the relation between theory and practice, also drawing on the developments in academia in the field of performance studies. Around the same time NTA started introducing performance art, relational aesthetics, conceptual – and socially engaged art practices as part of its curriculum. It has been an on going exploration into how theatre artists adapt these forms occurring first in the expanded contemporary visual arts field and moving into the staged arts. Not the least NTA has explored ways of merging these practices with pedagogy and the more traditional training of actors and scenographers such as voice and body training or drawing and model building. Through our teaching model 'Laboratories' we have been able to question and explore new ways – and combinations of

methodology – reflecting on going art practices. This has been artist led - and research led teaching by a wide range of visiting artists.

When NTA developed their BA programs under the Bologna reform, it established itself as an international education building a highly international student body. The educations were structured as flexible programs of study that are curated each semester with a series of workshops from contemporary artists and pedagogues. This highly flexible teaching structure has allowed NTA to develop the strengths and artistic interest not only of each student group (an acting class consist of 8 – 10 students, a scenography class between 5 - 8 students) but of each individual student. The goal is to foster the artistic interest and talent of each student. It is fair to claim that NTA has been part of inspiring and challenging the national development in particular through the work of our alumni students. Due to its peripheral location geographically NTA has been allowed to experiment without too much interference and questioning from the established Norwegian theatre scene. This has allowed NTA to build a platform and confidence in its teaching strategies, basing its methodology on teaching ways to constantly develop methods that fits each artist and each project, as method affects aesthetics. Being the first theatre education in Norway to emphasize the relationship between critical theory and practice, NTA has influenced the theatre scene and other educations in the country. Graduated students have learned to articulate their ideas and concepts and to situate them in larger contemporary contexts. This has led to many former students receiving funding from the Norwegian Arts Council, and in that way they have been able to further develop their artistic work in collaboration with other artists. Students from the two departments, acting and scenography, collaborate extensively throughout their education developing independent productions together, which sometimes find a life outside the academy as professional productions with high integrity and originality. The collaboration between the two departments questions the role and the function not only of actors and scenographers in theatre making, but also of the director as a supposed necessary figure of organizational and artistic power.

Starting up in 1996, NTA was founded on an interest in object oriented and visual forms of theatre connected both to visual arts and

architecture. After the turn of the millennium dance training and the developments in conceptual art, performance art, and relational art practices have successively been applied and integrated. The way in which these aesthetic forms have influenced the staged arts have been explored pedagogically through student active research. From this background NTA is now moving into a deeper exploration and engagement with the field of music, sound, and composition.

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**ON SITE. BEHIND GLASS. WITHIN THE LIVING.
PRODUCTION AXES AND PERFORMATIVE SCENOGRAPHY
IN THE PERFORMING ARTS FIELD**

SIDSEL GRAFFER¹

Abstract

Performative intermediation emphasizes performative spatial re-situating and re-contextualization of the work. As part of the language around performative architecture, *spatial agency on behalf of others* (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011, Kossak, Petrescu, Schneider, Tyszczuk and Walker 2010) encourages to apply architectural competence about space *not to build, but to solve problems spatially*. This gives an intermediation less about explaining and more about spatial staging.

The function of curation is not institutionalized within the performing arts field, but is understood by Florian Malzacher (Malzacher 2014, 117-127) as initiating interaction *between work and context*. I propose to pursue the institutionalization of the function of curation within the performing arts field as *spatial cura*. Scenography is about to formulate not only a new strategy, but a new paradigm that situates performing arts conceptions within the spatial, rather than the literary. As a consequence, performing arts works might more often present themselves not as a function of a specific production axis, but more as individual artworks positioned within the public.

Keywords: Performing arts field, the artwork/context relationship, spatial-institutional parameters, performative scenography.

Site-specificity understood as an aesthetic strategy that connects an artwork to its context has different histories within the visual arts world and the performing arts world. The visual arts world has a well-documented broad spectre of genres that since the sixties examined the work/site relationship from both within as well as outside of art

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institutions and gallery spaces. More importantly, “site” and “context” within the visual arts history and discourse points at and include “institution”, “architecture”, “urban” and “public” in a way that inform critical perspectives on gallery spaces and visual arts institutions, problematize field structures and in particular the relationship between institutional mandates and architecture, recognize institutionalized framing and parameters as an aesthetic possibility and tool box – and ultimately situates artworks within the public realm and define spectatorship as citizenship. Over the last years, this complex history and discourse has manifested itself in Oslo in relevant exhibitions. Let me mention three examples: *Temporary Utopias* by Book & Heden (The National Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003), a site-specific installation in conjunction with the *Commission on Power and Democracy* documented the hopes and dreams of the individual while performing institutional critique of the museum and its architecture formerly The National Bank. *City of Dislocation* (Oslo Pilot, 2015) was a two-year investigation of historical landmarks about to be vacated as newly merged art institutions move into new headquarters, and part of planning a new Art Biennale in Oslo. Finally, *Munchmuseet on the Move* (Munchmuseet, 2016) is a four-year, off-site curatorial project with the aim to establish relationships with the neighbourhoods the Munch Museum will be moving through on its one-mile journey down to the new museum facilities at the waterfront of Bjørvika.

In the performing arts world, on the other hand, the work/site history took a different path. Site-specific performing arts productions has had a tradition for being conducted *outside* of institutions and performing arts venues or spaces, often incorporating places primarily for their historical reference part of aesthetic conceptions resting on notions of site that ties site to identity in static models. Site-specific spatial practice *as scenography* dedicated to explore theatre architecture or performing arts institutions *as site* seems absent. The same goes for critical discourse on these matters contextualizing beyond normative critique of theatre architecture. When conducted within theatre architecture, scenography seems autonomous by convention, even when part of productions that conceptually present themselves as heteronomous projects. Within the performing arts field, “site” and “context” and “public” still

refers to “outside” and “landscape”. When inside of theatre architecture we are a silent collective audience not paying attention to the once representative theatre architecture at the very center of public space. Mirrored against the vital discourse on the relocation of art institutions in Oslo as a rapidly growing multicultural and transforming capital, the silence within the performing arts community is alarming. But this is not a Norwegian phenomenon.

I propose that the reason for this is the structure and organization of the performing arts field. In Norway, production and presentation (intermediation) of performing art is organized by a *spatial-institutional concept* we could call *the production axis*. This is a formalized and institutionalized static structure that ties institution, funding, architectural space, production procedures, intermediation – and even aesthetics – closely together with, in most cases, fairly predictable outcome. In this structure – regardless of which production axis we refer to, scenography and the spatial is playing a supportive role and subordinate to the aesthetic concepts produced by directors and dramaturges.

A number of parameters have come together and made it possible to readdress the work/site relationship within performing arts in a broader institutional context, analyzing the effect of field structures, institutional organisation and architecture on artworks. With reference to theories of architectural performativity, this text presents a perspective on the relationship between institutional mandate, architecture and scenography. It is my overall intention to explain some of the mechanisms that affect objecthood, spectatorship and publicness in the performing arts field, address and criticize the prevailing autonomy in scenography and encourage scenography as critical spatial practice.

Field Structures under Pressure

Some changes has put the production axis of the performing arts world under healthy pressure. Firstly, we are given new analytical perspectives that describes how work and site affect each other mutually. Theories of spatial and *architectural performativity* (Leatherbarrow 2005, 7-19 and Hensel 2013) that highlights non-human capacity to perform spatial

agency on its immediate context explains how immediate spatial and larger spatial-institutional contexts perform and work in the everyday and in the specific art situation. The language opened up by this rapidly growing body of publications is not focusing on representational qualities or meaning, but instead traces the effects caused by architecture. New generations of scenographers is introduced to these new ways of thinking, and learn that there is no such thing as neutral structures or a neutral backdrop.

Secondly, out of the same language a new design strategy has grown, Performance Design, which explicitly explore design not as object making, but rather as a staging of spatial situations that instigates actions, as an exploration of its own noun potential, examining what it can do. Performance design conducted as urban installations (Lehmann, 2009) demonstrate what an aesthetic concept *resting on a spatial strategy* is capable of doing. Within scenography, performative design strategies is largely being conducted outside of theatre architecture and institutionalized production axes. This was clear in Prague Quadennial 2015 where a friction between on the one hand metaphorical manifestations rooted in split space and inviting interpretation as fiction, and on the other hand performative intervention rooted in shared space and inviting interpretation as situation, pointed at a possible paradigm shift in scenography. Performing arts conceptions resting on the literary and meaning will more often be replaced by conceptions resting on the spatial and function. The role of the scenographer will have to change accordingly, and conception as such will no longer belong to the within institutions formalized director-dramaturge duo. A scenography as this will potentially challenge conventions of production axes, and will add to the pressure on the field structure. A question about what something can do quickly leads to what it potentially can be.

Lastly, The Norwegian performing arts field added relevant material to the work/site discourse when we 15 years ago institutionalized a new production axis rigged for heteronomous genres and performative design strategies. The Cultural Rucksack is a national programme for art and culture in Norwegian schools with the objective to enable children and young people to enjoy artistic and cultural productions provided by professionals. The Programme has been part of the Government's

cultural policy for primary and lower and upper secondary school since 2001, reaches every child, and is a joint venture between the cultural and educational sectors at the national and local level. Assignment of program responsibility to local authorities has promoted strong local ownership, but sadly also a negative *modus operandi* within the regional network of programmers. Productions produced within other production axes, mainly autonomous works, is bought and distributed in this completely new spatial-institutional context, with works undergoing unforeseen transformations as a result. Very few new productions specially made for the spatial-institutional situation of The Cultural Rucksack are being produced, leaving a vast gap between the for once structural potentiality and the aesthetic reality. On the positive side is the discussions within the performing arts community about the aesthetic consequences of touring productions between highly different institutional contexts and production axes.

The Production Axis of the Performing Arts World

The production axis holds different positions within the visual arts field and the performing arts field, much because of mandates, production procedures and mediation. The relationship between artwork, architecture and institution is staged differently in the visual arts world and in the performing arts world, which gives different institutionalized definitions of autonomy contrary to the comparisons often presented in the white cube/black box discourse. In the visual arts field, the work, site and institution is loosely tied together, and the object is autonomous *per se*, because the work/site relationship is split as a result of external production. This ties the object closer to the studio and the artist than the gallery and institution. The gallery space performs autonomy as a guarantee; the artist can stage the artwork as whatever he wants it to be. This creates productive friction and artworks less a product of production axes but rather curatorial concepts often provided by independent curators. On the other hand, the relationship between artwork (understood as scenography), site (understood as theatre architecture) and institution within the performing arts world is defined

firstly by an object that is bound in time and place to its architectural context, and secondly by the fact that this architectural context is tightly bound up in ideal-typical space-axes which have strong representational ties. This gives a production axis that holds a strong grip on the object, and works directly on the objecthood of the production, forcing autonomous or heteronomous artworks and specific spectatorship modes.

The spaces of the performing arts production axis can be understood as a horizontal sequence of spaces. I propose to look at these spaces and scenography passing through them as topological objects. With reference to the notion *topology* as applied to theatre by Benjamin Whistutz (Whistutz 2013, 4) these spaces and objects can be stretched, compressed, bent or contorted, but not cut in two, and visualized like rubber geometry. Seen this way, a topological object is a spatial concept that can manifest itself both as an abstraction and something very concrete. The topological object could be an aesthetic concept, a scenography or a type of theatre architecture. We might say that a production has a topological idea understood as a spatial concept, and that this topological idea is transformed when passing through the different architectural spaces of the axis. In a given intermediation of a theatrical production, the axis is presented as a concrete spatial sequence from production to presentation belonging to a given institutional mandate.

So in what way does the axis affect the work? I propose that the axis performs its apparatus on a theatre architectural topological level embedded within a larger contemporary spatial-institutional context. It works through architecture and does three things of particular interest; it stages collective and individual spectatorship, forces the objecthood of scenography towards autonomy or heteronomy and situates the work within the public.

The properties of the axis is not first and foremost architectural communication of meaning through theatre architecture. Rather, the axis performs disciplinary and defining forces and works through all its parts. These are ever present strong forces, I would argue, even stronger than the content oriented aesthetic concepts of the individual productions presented. The perspective outlined rests on the notions *spatial agency* (Latour 2005, 71) which is measured by effect rather than the intentional, *performative architecture* (Hensel 2013) which is understood as architecture

that works on its context, *apparatus* (Bandry 1986, 286-318) that describes how a complex spatial-institutional institution performs, and *event-space* which understands events as “active forces that undermine architectures traditional role as a fixed durable object designed to order space and those who inhabit it” (Hannah 2011, 56). If we think about architecture and events in this way, we can look at the relationship between the axes and artworks as organisms that affect each other mutually.

Firstly, there is a negotiation between the axis and the work about objecthood in an autonomy/heteronomy-dyad. This involves all topological objects present; the topological idea, the scenographic realization of that idea, the architecture. The axis will always drive an object away from or towards autonomy, and its status as the one or the other is not guaranteed by the genre of the work, but rather the situation.

Secondly, there is negotiation about spectatorship. Like Maaïke Bleeker (Bleeker 2008), I understand spectatorship as something you actively do, of the noun *to spectate*, an action, partly controlled by optics as described by Jonathan Crary (Crary 1990), partly by the conventions as they are embodied in scopic regimes, as described by Hal Foster (Foster 1988). But I would like to add that this individual action is not taking place in a neutral situation. Rather I propose that to spectate is an act of negotiation between the singular mono-spectatorship and the collective spectatorship staged by architecture. Architecture stages spectatorship, and different architecture types and production axes have a *spectatorship apparatus* that forces our negotiation between ourselves and the collective in different directions. The spectatorship apparatus is not a topological matter restricted to the architecture/scenography relationship, it is a negotiation between the axis, the work and the situation.

Lastly, production axes situates productions within the public, partly by carving out space and protect and sustain, partly by shielding and keeping out. Production axes represent different possible aesthetics, and I think we do not explore this potential to the full. Touring of a production as a premise can be examined conceptually. I also think that we are lacking a language to talk about this because research on theatre architecture and scenography is predominantly normative, often a bit lost in a “me-object-phenomenology”-situation, and often do not problematize complex field structures, as does the axis-perspective. I think that we

underestimate what a specific axis does to the production process, the artwork, our spectatorship, and position within the public. The not visible too thick walls of the production axis seems less about positioning within than keeping away from the public.

Performative Scenography

In theatre history, scenography has had status as subordinate and function of, rather than on equal footing with and/or autonomous from architecture. But scenography can overarch and stage theatre architecture and production axes in a way that emphasises its own capacity to perform a function, to explore its own noun-potential instead of being a designed object. Pamela C. Scorzin (Scorzin 2011, 259-60) denotes scenography “predominantly concerned with staging, orchestrating, dramatizing and enacting” as *meta-scenography*, which is close to my notion of *performative scenography*.

I propose to define Performative scenography as a scenography that stages spatial situations which examine public, institutional, architectural, media and social context in a catalogue of strategies from heteronomous genres. Performative scenography can be understood as counter-actions that responds to and re-stages what is already present. This can be understood as a three-step process; situating the work within the public, re-staging the work in the autonomy-heteronomy-dyad and finally re-staging the spectatorship.

Situating a work is about connecting a work to a site, about how a topological idea becomes a real work in a real space within the public. It is about responding to an axis through responding to an actual space. Genres such as *site-specificity*, *installation*, *meta-fiction*, *appropriation*, *parodic dialogue*, *self-referentiality* and *postproduction* all denotes artistic strategies that perform this process as incorporation of other sites or work in a new work, and can be conducted as performative scenography.

Re-staging the autonomy-heteronomy-dyad and spectatorship is about negotiating with the axis-apparatus and the space. Scenographers tend to state that they see their task as always working site-specific. From my perspective, I would rather say that axes forces very different

work/site-relationships and that scenography might be made for very different conceptions of site, – or for transit. Performative interventions can open up or close a work and stage spectatorship contrary to conventions performed by the axis.

Performative scenography is a strategy that can be used within or outside of theatre architecture or the art institution, as part of the production or an act of the intermediation process. I think it is a paradox that performative scenography is conducted mainly as Performance Design in outdoor public space. Applied within theatre architecture it can unexpectedly open up and transform the communication of theatre architecture with great force. This applies to conceptual use of evolving stages. An example is *Splatterboulevard* by René Pollesch in Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg 2003, which turned the conventions of the main stage against itself through intense use of the evolving stage. Another example is *Viol* by Botho Strauss in Odeon-Théâtre de l'Europe in Paris 2005, where the same continuous spinning opened up a meditative space for the content.

Touring between axes means to examine a given topological idea and potential when confronted with a given theatre space part of a given axis. When travelling between axes the work needs to be *de-situated* and *de-staged* back to its *topological zero-point* before the topological idea is *re-situated* and *re-staged* as a performative act. This might seem obvious, but is often neglected and lead to unforeseen transformation, de-contextualization and forced spectatorship, but it can also transform both genre and content of a production.

Production Axes in a Matrix Model

The Norwegian performing arts field consists of several production and mediation axes, but the specific qualities of particular three axes are interesting to compare. Borrowing notions from biology that refers to where experiments takes place, I have called the axes *The Situ -axis* ("on site"), *The Vitro-axis* ("inside or behind glass") and *The Vivo-axis* ("within the living").

Presented in a matrix model, the qualities of the axes becomes less static and more relative and conditioned by the given situation. The

Situ-axis is placed in the middle to illustrate the opposite forces of the Vitro and Vivo axes regarding autonomy and heteronomy.

Axis Quality	Vitro-Axis	Situ-Axis	Vivo-Axis
Institutional status	Programming institutions with black box spaces. (Black Box Theatre, Oslo).	National institutions with baroque illusionist stages. (The National Theatre, Oslo).	Public projects that present art to special target groups. (The cultural Rucksack).
Institutional and aesthetic mandate	Presentation and co-production of Avant-Garde aesthetics	Production and presentation of the classical canon	Presentation of aesthetic plurality
Location of the institution	Non-representational theatre architecture	Representational monumental theatre architecture	Not located within theatre architecture
Production is ...	External	Internal	External
Presentation is ...	Internal	Internal	External
Is the production intended for touring?	Works are produced for touring between similar institutions part of international networks in a given theatre architecture	Works are not produced for touring	Productions are intended to go on tour and be presented within all types of theatre architecture and venues as well as within architecture built for other purposes.
Theatre architecture	Black Box	Illusionist proscenium arch	Non
Work/site relationship is staged by the axis	Theatre architecture as space. The work is in transit, passing through.	Theatre architecture as place. The work is stationary.	Place ambition. The work is nomadic.
Situated by the spatial apparatus of the axis	Horizontal towards topological zero-point. Implosion.	Vertical towards place.	Horizontal towards situation (place and time). Explosion
Objecthood staged by the spatial apparatus of the axis	The axis forces autonomy and de-contextualizes the work.	The axis does not force objecthood.	The axis forces heteronomy and contextualizes the work.

Spectatorship is staged by the spatial apparatus of the axis	High degree of staging. The axis stages mono-spectatorship (individual).	High degree of staging. The axis stages poly-spectatorship (collective).	Low degree of staging. Spectatorship is staged by the work.
Potential for performative scenography	The axis invites performative scenography to re-stage both autonomy and mono-spectatorship	The axis invites performative scenography to appropriate architecture and restage poly-spectatorship	The axis invites performative scenography to stage the situation and spectatorship.

Behind Glass, but Close to the Living: *The Vitro* – Axis

“In vitro” means “inside glass, but close to the living”. The *Vitro-axis* is characterised by an external production space and is associated with the programming avant-garde institutions of international networks presenting independent productions produced for transit and transportation between black box spaces throughout Europe and North-America. The axis forces mono-spectatorship and autonomy contrary to the neutrality and flexibility associated with it. It performs a strong de-situating apparatus by pushing the work towards abstraction, which gives a de-contextualized work close to its topological zero-point and autonomy. The axis forces spectatorship that facilitates individual mono-spectatorship, as a force of implosion that drives attention towards the work alone. An example of an institution within the vitro-axis is Black Box Teater in Oslo.

Black box studio/space/architecture, the modernist theatre space per se, is defined by its blackness, flexible seating and presumed neutrality – and is often celebrated or criticized in a normative way, as by Iain MackIntosh (Mackintosh 1993) or David Wiles (Wiles 2003, 254-56). It is not flexible in the sense that it can become and mean anything, as argued by Per Edstøm and Penti Piha (Edstrøm and Piha 1976). Rather it is “chock full” in the sense of a *non-place* (Augé 1995) and an *abstract space* (Lefebvre 1991) that binds presence in a way that does not allow for organic social life. What is interesting with the blackbox-type now is that it is about to undergo changes and become more flexible. Parallel to

this process, the normative criticism of the blackbox-type loses validity and is being replaced by relevant axis criticism.

The black box disconnects from both its immediate architectural context and the art object, which in turn has contributed to the general separation of scenography from architecture. Autonomy now seems to be the general *modus operandi* of scenographers regardless of axis or spaces. Scenographic practice has become limited, in stark contrast to the strategies demonstrated by performative scenography. As contemporary aesthetic is developing a continuously broader spectre of heteronomous genres and strategies, the gap between conceptual intentions and spatial strategies is growing. The language of the new and innovation is tied to *vitro*-production, instead of performative response to the axis as such.

On Site: *The Situ* – Axis

“In situ” means “on site”. The *Situ-axis* is associated with national institutions presenting a classical repertoire in baroque stages located in representative theatre architecture. The situ-axis is an integrated axis comfortable with its representative function and producing stationary work that attempts at staging collective spectatorship. The axis performs a particularly strong and vertical situating-apparatus that points at itself as place and here-ness and invites performative scenography to respond to its performative forces. An example of an institution within this axis is the main stage of the National Theatre of Norway.

The best example of performative scenography I have seen within this axis is *Emilia Galotti* by Lessing on Deutsches Theater in Berlin in 2003, where the scenographer Olaf Altmann activated a reflection on illusionist aesthetic conventions as execution of power. Most of the time the performative qualities of the situ axis is left unanswered by scenographers.

Within the Living: *The Vivo* – Axis

“In vivo” means “within the living”. This production axis is characterized by being completely split up, and is associated with a non art institution

that present art to audiences outside of art spaces, usually by organizing tours. The axis forces heteronomy and a broad spectre of possible spectatorships (dependent upon the spaces). The work is produced for touring in different architectural types and outside of theatre architecture. The axis has no theatre architecture type associated with it, but does have a very strong place-ambition, and challenge the work conceptually to respond to this ambition. The conception of site and the work/site relationship staged by the axis is not static. The axis has a strong situating apparatus that drives the work towards the situation understood as place and time here and now. The axis pushes towards heteronomy, and contextualizes even autonomous works. The spectatorship apparatus is open. The axis represents a huge possible space for heteronomous genres. The vivo-axis is dependent upon *performative intermediation* understood as staging the work as a specific situation where an arena for meeting and exchange between the work and the audience possibly might happen. Performative intermediation is an action that effects the artwork and vice-versa.

Distributing works produced for the vitro-axis within the vivo-axis led to unforeseen transformation of artworks within The Cultural Rucksack that has taken some years to overcome. But we have also seen high quality. Three productions of the vivo-axis demonstrates how the performativity of the axis works, and how performative scenography, performative intermediation and spatial curation has laid foundation for a new way of presenting art to children within The Cultural Rucksack. *Hold me* by Goro Tronsmo was a site-specific performance conducted as a *context-sensitive mirroring* in 15 versions for schools. *Utosafari* by Nummen Safari brought its own mobile theatre architecture; the *Utoscope Flexible Roller Unit*, and staged a *close encounter* between pedagogical space and art space. *Invisible* by Katma performed a production only known to the audience within libraries and *transformed* public space.

Performative Intermediation and Spatial Curation

Re-structuring the Norwegian performing arts field have unexpectedly opened up new insights and discourses within the performing arts

community regarding the effects of field structures in general and the production axis in particular. We seem to have become more aware of to which extent the production axis as structure *connects and disconnects the performing arts work from the public*, that *performative spatial strategies* in scenography and intermediation represents *aesthetic re-connection*, and that the *re-connection of the performing arts work to the public* presupposes the *function of spatial curation*.

The long term effect of a field structure resting on the production axis is that objecthood and spectatorship is more a product of production axes than aesthetic concepts and conscious situating within public space. Artists are forced to present within certain spaces and have limited access to broad variety of architecture as much theatre architecture are kept outside of axes, and not in use for other purpose than local amateur performances or commercial purposes. There is no quick-fix to this problem. Institutions are continuously opening up. Recent publications on public art, such as *Public Servants. Art and the Crisis of the Common Good* (Burton, Jackson, Willsdon, 2016) or *The Everyday Practice of Public Art* (Cartiere and Zebracki, 2016) provide helpful perspectives on publicness and the relationship between public realm, sphere, space, sector and representation.

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CULTURAL POLICY IN THE AGE OF INTERMEDIAL PRACTICE

MELANIE FIELDSETH¹

Abstract

Arts Council Norway is a public funding body for art and culture that awards grants at arm's length from political decisions and the cultural policy set by the Ministry of Culture. What constitutes an "arm's length" is not however fixed, but changes according to the agenda of different political parties and constellations as they come into power. These agendas can run counter to the practices, modes of production and forms of expression that artists are exploring and creating. This text aims to illuminate the dynamic between politics, policymakers and funding bodies, and how it can indirectly influence the formation of artistic identity and the conditions for artistic development. The political prioritization of dance in cultural policy in Norway serves as the central example.

Keywords: Cultural policy, public funding for performing art, institutions, independent artistic practices, contemporary performing art.

As I write I am completing my four-year term as the performing arts advisor for Arts Council Norway, the primary public funding body for the arts and culture at the national level. Explaining the composition and aim of my workplace is no easy task. It is an agency subordinate to the Ministry of Culture. "Arts Council Norway" is an umbrella term for the whole organization and is comprised of a number of different funds, the largest of which being the Norwegian Cultural Fund, and other administrative responsibilities in the arts and cultural sector. The various parts of the organization also function in their different capacities as advisory bodies to the central government and to the Ministry of Culture.

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One of the mandates of Arts Council Norway is to support new creation and the development of independent artistic practices and forms of expression through the Norwegian Cultural Fund. Grants are awarded by application to specific schemes within the cultural fund, based on the “arm’s length” principle. This means that other professionals in the artistic field in question – artists and other colleagues, are reviewing applications and making decisions either in expert committees whose members are appointed by the council proper, or in a combination of review and recommendation by expert committees and the council, whose members are appointed by the Ministry of Culture. The reviewing process is based on criteria for artistic potential and quality in accordance with the objective of the scheme in question. This system ensures that the funds Arts Council Norway receives from the government through the cultural fund are allocated to schemes that support projects, artists and ensembles on an artistic basis rather than an instrumental, political basis. In other words, reviewing, recommendation and allocation take place “at arm’s length” from political processes and cultural policy decisions.

Arts Council Norway does not set cultural policy, but neither is it immune to cultural policy decisions and politics in general. The Norwegian Cultural Fund is at present organized into broad artistic disciplines: performing arts, music, visual arts and literature, as well as support for cultural heritage. Each discipline or area has its own history of when and why it was introduced into the fund and of how the different funding schemes were designed and implemented, and then either developed or dismantled over the years².

Artistic fields are indirectly influenced by most political and cultural policy decisions that impact Arts Council Norway. Not only in terms of the types of grants and the amount of funding available, but the conditions for artistic creation, production and performance, and ultimately the kind of work being created and performed, might also be affected. This essay examines some examples of how this dynamic has played out in the case of the performing arts in Norway.

² See for example Fidjestøl 2015 for an account of the history of Arts Council Norway.

Performing Arts in the Cultural Fund

My work as performing arts advisor has centered on three grant schemes in the Norwegian Cultural Fund. These schemes support contemporary artistic production in the performing arts through the development and performance of short-term projects and long-term bodies of work and artistic investigations. I am using “performing arts” here to refer broadly to practices and works that include time-based art, live art, dance, choreography and theater, as well as interdisciplinary and intermedial performance work.

This broad spectrum of terms is indicative of the development of independent performing arts in Norway. Historically, independent artistic practices and works have not been expected to conform to pre-existing traditions, methods, formats and forms of expression. Nor have they been expected to adhere to conventions for production processes and the use of material, media, time, space, sound, text, body and visual elements. The independent performing arts scene has been defined by what the artists actually do and by the discourse that develops through the work and in response to it. This is a dynamic that starts with the artists and is the foundation of independent artistic work in a field that, especially in terms of dramatic theatre, is otherwise defined by institutions working within more easily recognizable and defined artistic traditions, genres and production practices. This is of course a generalization. A noticeable development over the last fifteen years or so is that more artists are looking to initiate and create their own work, and that this has caused the artistic landscape to expand into both genre-based and experimental or exploratory artistic directions. At the same time, collaborations between independent artists and institutional partners have expanded, as have the range of artistic and production practices within national and regional institutions.

Within the performing arts area in the cultural fund there are a number of different schemes geared towards artists, arenas and other professional contexts. At present there are schemes for: pre-production grants which foster research, exploration and the development of methods; project-based single-year or multi-year production grants; comprehensive, multi-year support for companies and artists developing

and presenting bodies of work and long-term artistic investigations; single-year or multi-year support for festivals and artistic programming; guest performance and touring; single-year or multi-year grants for dance centers; as well as a scheme for the production and dissemination of knowledge through seminars, publications, workshops etc.

These schemes have been formed and re-formed in the grey area between cultural policies set at the ministry level, national and regional political interests, professional interests and developments in the artistic field – both in terms of artistic practice as well as programming and curatorial practices, and analysis and evaluation carried out within the arts council system. This conglomeration of forces influences the way public support is structured, but also the conditions for artistic practice and the development of organizations, platforms, venues and services that support creation, production and performance.

Cultural Policy, Legitimacy and Visibility

The first small step towards formalizing and legitimizing the existence of independent ensembles and artists in theater and dance came in the 1970s, and was initiated by the artists themselves (Bergsgard and Røyseng 2001, 15-27). They formed an interest organization to lobby for public funding. This occurred at a time when democratization, participation and local and regional identities were prominent ideas in cultural life. The act of lobbying for public funding speaks to the legitimizing power of cultural policy and the role public funding occupies in relation to the arts in Norway. It can also be seen as a response to internal professional hierarchies and politics within the performing arts field. Public funding became a symbol that expressed official recognition of an artist-driven development that opened a space for other forms of expression than those found in state and regional institutions or in commercial theaters.

The independent performing arts field has expanded greatly since the 1970s. The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of artist collectives and individual artists who weren't concerned with genres, with the hierarchy of theatrical elements in pre-determined forms, with the

boundaries between professions and disciplines, with limited definitions of craft, or with the perfection of craft. They were instead interested in the performance situation they could create between the audience and themselves, by exploring and manipulating the energy at play in the space. For some that meant playfully creating, adapting and appropriating material and their surroundings for new dramaturgical, theatrical, choreographic and performative possibilities. For others it meant subverting hierarchies and expectations, roles and the division of labor within forms of expression and traditions, or perhaps challenging definitions and relationships between the elevated and the mundane. Other artists were interested in how to take into account and exploit the immediacy of being present in the theater space. Still others were concerned with exploring new ways of creating meaning and experience by creating and using visual and sound objects and technologies as performers.

The wave of experimentation and the exploration of new ways to create and perform made a big impact and paved the way for further investigations of artistic possibilities across disciplines and media. It also provoked a change in the organization of public funding for independent ensembles and artists. Instead of operational grants awarded to groups who fulfilled a set of primarily formal and professional criteria, project-based funding for artistic production in the performing arts was introduced in Arts Council Norway in 1998 (Fidjestøl 2015, 217-221.). Along with it came a new set of criteria that emphasized experimentation and originality of approach as indicators of artistic potential and quality.

Return to Disciplines?

By the early years of the 2000s, the performing arts field was varied in terms of formal languages, method, material and modes of performance. Also around 2000, a new generation of choreographers and performers developing noticeably different approaches to choreographic practice, performance, movement and the body marked yet another expansion of the artistic landscape. Makers and performers such as Mette Edvardsen and the duo Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki turned their attention to

conditions and conventions of performance and perception, which has resulted in poetic, at times linguistically playful, yet always rigorously structured and conceptually thoughtful works. Another line of exploration can be followed through the work of choreographer Hooman Sharifi. The concrete, physical reality of movement and its political contexts, ranging from the confrontational to the vulnerable body, surges through the work he has created with Impure Company.

Regardless of whether artists self-identified as working with, within or in constructive opposition to theater, dance or performance art traditions and contexts, their work was likely supported through a common funding source within Arts Council Norway and presented in many of the same venues and festivals throughout the country. This lack of strong disciplinary and genre divisions within the artistic field itself, as well as in public funding schemes, created a shared history within the independent performing arts and shared concerns over issues of resources and structural support. Independent performing artists and ensembles, as well as venues, presenters and curators that follow and present their work, face many of the same challenges despite their varying artistic aims, approaches, sensibilities and priorities.

Among some, though certainly not all, choreographers and dancers there has been a strong sense of identity as dance artists, and a strong desire to maintain and accentuate this identity. The need to identify with dance can best be understood in a historical context, in relation to the development of cultural policy for the performing arts at the political level and within the Ministry of Culture. More specifically, it can be seen within the context of how the State has created dedicated theater institutions with permanent ensembles. While national and regional theater institutions have been established throughout the country, the same cannot be said of dance. There are at least 14 theater institutions with permanent ensembles, depending on how one counts, that receive at least a certain percentage of their funding directly over the national budget, while there are two official dance institutions that receive funding directly from the State, the Norwegian National Ballet and Carte Blanche – the Norwegian National Company of Contemporary Dance. All other companies, constellations and artists must apply for

funding from other funding bodies, which, more often than not, means Arts Council Norway and the Norwegian Cultural Fund.

With a lesser institutional presence, it can be claimed that more pressure is put on the work of independent ensembles and artists. However, the fact that there are fewer institutions dedicated to producing dance hasn't inhibited the development of the art form in terms of artistic quality, ambition and originality of approach. Some would even claim that it has been conducive to creating an artistically expansive, vibrant and lively field. The same can be said of theatrical and performative work created outside the dedicated theater institutions. But the lack of institutions for dance production has undeniably created fewer stable job opportunities for dancers and choreographers and has probably led to less public visibility for the art form in general. When it comes to the relationship between cultural policy decisions and the potential for artistic development, the answer to the question of whether there should be more or fewer institutions with permanent ensembles often hinges on one's perspective and priorities.

When the coalition government of the Labor, Center and Socialist Left parties came into power in 2005, it launched a new cultural policy program, *Kulturløftet*³. The new government aimed to strengthen the arts and cultural sector by making cultural policy a more prominent political domain and by increasing the sector's level of funding to one percent of the national budget by 2014. In the first phase of the new cultural policy the government presented a platform of 15 priorities. One of the items on the agenda was to heighten and strengthen the status of dance. A number of different actions were taken in order to achieve this goal. I will highlight two of them that indicate how the new cultural policy encouraged a renewed focus on artistic disciplines within the performing arts.

One step taken was to further develop and strengthen Dansens Hus, which was founded in 2004, by establishing it as a national venue for dance and housing it in a permanent location in Oslo as of 2008. This was something new in the landscape of venues and presenters, a venue for dance only. Prior to the creation of Dansens Hus, and with the exception of festivals, programming venues have presented mixed

³ See *Kulturløftet, Politisk regnskap 2005-2009*, 33-36.

seasons of work within a range of aesthetics and forms of expression. The other act of relevance to how cultural policy impacts artistic practices is the implementation of a separate grant scheme for production of dance and choreography within the cultural fund in 2006. Prior to this decision, there was one grant scheme for production common to the whole of the independent performing arts field. As of autumn 2006 there were two, one for dance and one for theater, of which the theater category has become a catchall for everything but projects and artists within or that relate to dance and choreography as practice and context.

Perspectives and Priorities

The objective of this essay is not to argue for or against strengthening the status of dance within cultural policy and at the funding level, but rather uses it as one example of the mechanisms at work and how they may impact artistic development.

The potential consequences of a return to disciplines within the performing arts seem clear enough when seen in relation to the works and practices being created and performed. Dance and theater are insufficient as categories as they alone do not cover the span and depth of artistic approaches, expressions and modes of performance being explored and developed. Intermedial and interdisciplinary performance work has been around for quite some time. But there is also a growing interest among artists in Norway who are working within both theater and dance contexts, to let performance branch into other media, most noticeably text and film, but also photography, installations and politically and socially engaged projects, as well as radio, print and internet media. These gestures expand the work itself, but while also investigating the potential for both displacement and enrichment of meaning and experience through interventions and manifestations in other media. These types of works often involve a questioning of theatrical, choreographic and performance conditions and situations. A questioning that is necessary if the performing arts field is to develop further artistically.

Artistically independent processes and works are not just independent of the theater and dance productions the institutions choose to initiate and produce. They are also independent of pre-determined aesthetic and artistic categories in the sense that artists themselves are free to define the needs and contexts of their work. Considering that part of the objective of supporting artistic production within the performing arts is to encourage exploration and experimentation, disciplinary boundaries may be a constructive foil as artists seek to push beyond them. But they may also become restrictions if defining artistic work as inside or outside disciplinary confines were to take precedence over supporting ambitious works and practices.

As long as focus is on the nature of the work or the contexts with which the work is dealing, these general disciplinary divisions aren't problematic. But working with them and within them nevertheless requires a flexible approach that allows supposed disciplinary boundaries to be questioned, expanded and re-defined based on what artists actually are exploring and developing, rather than on preconceived notions of what constitutes each individual discipline.

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THE INFLUENCE OF RUMI'S "PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE"
FOR A DIALOGUE BETWEEN RELIGIONS AND CULTURES

BOGDANA TODOROVA¹

Abstract

This article attempts to highlight the theoretical trajectories of what we might easily understand as a unitary project on "the philosophy of love" present in Rumi's tradition. We will focus on the main principles and core-values of this concept, in order to explain to what extent it might serve as a platform for dialogues between religions and cultures belonging to different traditions.

Keywords: love, wisdom, science, knowledge, Rumi.

The Sufi literature assigns a central place of relation reason – love and it is the same in the works of Mowlana. But he makes us intimate to this kind of love which cannot be seen among the book pages neither it could be discovered by erudition or science.

Love cannot be locked into the frames of what we speak or hear,
The love is an ocean which depth cannot be measured.
Do you really venture to estimate drops into the sea?
The sea is nothing compared to the Ocean! (Masnavi, 5, 2731-32).

We can discuss love for a very long time and we cannot end this problem. According to Mowlana, love is an experience which stays outside of what confines the verbal thinking and, at the same time, it is

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as real as the universe is with all its contents. The object of his love is transcendental towards this world, and even towards what we can imagine or fancy. Rumi's love depends on the internal world of the Sufi. But his verses not only allegorically reveal the psychological state of "asking of the truth" but they build symbols and images as parts of the philosophical thought which constructs universal abstract logical categories.

Mystic is a person knowing God and as far as knowledge of itself is an endless process mystics turn to different sciences. Love as a direct way to communicate with God proposes a new perspective, which is different from the rational one. This perspective contradicts the views of most of the exegetes according to whom theopathy can be achieved only by keeping the sense of Koranic revelation. This mystical way of theopathy and hope for unity with God by means of love is also known in the Christian tradition. This perspective is used to distinguish mystics from dialecticians and encyclopedists which prefer to apply natural science knowledge also to the qualities of human mind. Mowlana never ignores reason which has an essential and positive role. It is the necessary mediator which leads to the road to the Divine. This road can be walked only through "feet of love" and by complete self-renunciation. People call adept "this one who keeps the road". Love is a long travel by which the believer might reach to the Bright. This is the pure light which Suchravardi calls "the Light of all lights" and which Mowlana compares with the sunshine that means the real Divine essence. The same light is later defined by the Italian philosopher Marsilio Ficino as a unity of God and the world. The real world is only God, since He is the light. When it is illuminated by Him, love emanates in the world. Sufi had to develop his faith concentrating on his own internal world and meditating upon the Supreme Name. This form of concentration on the Divine Presence seeks identity with the Divine knowledge. The Divine reason is simultaneously the Veil and the Supreme Name, which the believer recites before to sink into the God. The Divine knowledge is the external from of the light of the eternal Imam.

Right theology is this love unity with the divine which cannot be explained by discursive judgment. Rumi and his followers call themselves "ashak" which means *loving* but not *Sufi*. One knows God to the extent in which one opens his soul and heart for the Truth.

Eternal wisdom is a universe in which the transcendental unity between different manifestations of the Truth is revealed. Dogma is not important for the Sufis but freedom to search the Truth and to be tolerant in respect to the others. In his poetry, Rumi describes how he initially looks for God in the Christian church, then in Hinduist temples, in Buddhist monasteries, but he does not manage to find God. Then he looked in his own heart and saw God living there. The heart of each believer is a temple where is performed complex biochemistry, and only deep latent love in it unlocks road of the faith. By his heart one shows his intimacy with God. Goodness, love and tolerance are human as well as divine principles. Divine will exposes for these who stay next to Him but not only in written text but in the depths of spiritual life. Love is this feature of soul which is most used in religions of the Scriptures in order to visualize internal self-manifestation of God into every human.

Love aspiration of soul to spiritual wisdom is philosophy, but in these terms philosophy is interpreted as a frank turn to secrets.

"The Core of love is a secret which cannot be published", says Rumi.

It is not solely in its philosophy the place where this "right balance", which provokes one to find equilibrium between "zahir" and "batin", between the esoteric and the exoteric, can be found. According to Sufism *gnosis* and love are spiritually identical – they both are a gift from God. Knowledge through love is an option for mutual recognition. If one knows how to love then he knows the reality which grows over the Idea. *To learn to love means to learn to be patient using reason but remaining a rebel with the heart.* When purified from any dirt, the heart is a hidden treasure where God knows the essences. Rumi claims in "Nafahat ala-Uns" that Abd al-Halik first introduces the heart prayer: "Let your heart be full of humiliation and humbleness, let the body suffers and the eyes cry. Let all your affairs to be open, and your prayers frank. Let your home become a home for prayers and the supreme wisdom Hakk Taalya become your." Language is always compatible with heart. This imperative might be also understood as it follows: let us pronounce what we feel. Prayer is empathy of speech, in its aureole since the act of speaking is a privilege of one who sees God in his heart.

"Heart is a sea and language is coast. When the sea rises waves it casts away its contents".

Breathing has a key-meaning in prayer. The technique of breathing is always respected in Asia and it is associated with the transformation of energy (similar to Ujgur Bhikshu who use Buddhist meditation by holy words, the Sufis perform "Zikr" – repeating God's names). "Hosh Dar Am" is a conscious breath in which the attention of praying is completely identical with his purposes. This term is used from the Teachers in the Syrian mountain, and Nadzhim ad-din Kubr changes its meaning associating it with the sound "Ha" (the universal God's name) which is consciously or unconsciously pronounced by any believer from birth to death. For Rumi this is the absolute moment in which person consolidates itself as an organic whole. This perspective presents the supreme secret of breathing. Such purposefulness is a necessary step before complete transformation. Since the road, in terms of Mowlana, is the road of full transformation – from the subjective state of sleeping to the state of objective consciousness of liberated person. This is the transformation which transfers the person from the world of outstanding potential into the world of will (which actually coincides with the Kingdom of heaven from the Gospel). Right here, one realizes his "telos" but if one remains in the state of "sleeping", he cannot perform his mission. Waste of personal Ego is compensated by objective love, and this waste is minimally compared to what the person obtains. The North Sufi (Persia, Afghanistan, Caucasus) claim that the secret of love includes the death of human essence. Only this one is able to love who liberates from himself. This liberation they call "Itlak" adopting it from the Buddhistic idea for the liberated person "Arhat".

The way of transformation is a triad which includes the moment of perception of time, i.e. the perception of the difference between the "presence here" (*Huzur*) and the "absence" (*Gaflat*). The second stage begins when verbal thinking ends its cycle and inaugurates the direct sensation in which words are needless. Finally comes the third moment – the moment of perception of heart. When one asks Rumi, "Where is the world of the absolute?" he answers, "Into the heart!"

The three stages correspond to three stages of knowledge:

- The first stage is "firm knowledge" or logical knowledge. Although not denying it, the Sufi consider it limited since it includes only signs, features, qualities, i.e. attributes but not

substance (*essence*). Logical knowledge emerges by means of analysis and synthesis, but as far as the Divine essence is absolute, it does not allow neither analysis nor synthesis and it is impossible to understand it by logical way.

- The second stage is "full conviction" or experimental knowledge.
- The third stage is "real conviction" in which there is a full fusion of Object and Subject, the emergence of observing into the observed.

The triad of the road Shariat-Tarika-Hakika corresponds to the triad Know-See-Exist.

By acquirement of Shariat one is guided by reason, but by Tarika he is guided by love.

The road, as a metaphor, includes the figures of stops ("makam"): penance, caution, abstention, misery, patience, hope, submission, and finally one comes to "hakika", i.e. the real existence. When obtaining it, the Sufi intuitively understands the right essence of the truth and people start to call him "arif" (sanctified) or "Man of the real essence" since his conscious is dissolved in the object of meditation.

God, on the other hand, is the mirror in which the spiritual person contemplates his own reality. People call heretical the view of ibn-Arabi that each prophet is not just an aspect of the Supreme Logos but he is really the Divine Logos. Since the problem concerns not the rejection of dogmatic forms of religiosity but something more complex – the universal sense of the Revelation, through exoteric aspects of religiosity. The Right in these providential forms of religiosity is coded "the universal".

The south Sufis (Arabia, Spain, Africa, Mesopotamia) choose for their second homeland former Christian lands and that is why they are familiar with the Christian concept for God as love. "God is love" (John 3, 16) – he is who gives from his wealth of Speech the words by which people can love Him (1). This perspective is legitimate in the Christian thought, says prof. Kapriev, since

"the wild state to speak familiar with the transcendental origin, and the Christian to come to his freedom." (Kapriev 1991, 149)

This concept could be found also in Rumi – "God is love", "The world is created by love", "The world exists supported by love". Love as

an attribute of God is revealed in numerous Koranic verses. The Sufis often quote Ayat 5:54 in which is demonstrated the hierarchic character of the relations between the Divine love to humans and that one of humans to God. But this inter-relation is not a right vertical but a circular one. Love is a spiritual circle. It comes from God at the beginning as beauty, then from God as love because He embraces the world, and finally it is pleasure returning to God. Existing is pleasure, and the permanent Divine presence in it is Light. Unconditionally, God is love but this attribute is endless as long as it defines His reality. As a center of antipodes God controls all attributes and excels them in His essence. On the one hand, He is love, but, on the other hand, He is something much more. This apprehensibility of the Absolute and, at the same time, revealing of impossibility it to be achieved is the core of the poetic dialectic of Mowlana, unlike traditional Sufism.

“The world is a mirror revealing perfection of love! Who can say that the part is bigger than the whole?” (Divan, 25248)

Any living creature feels the necessity for another, seeks the presence of another and aims to the unity with another. “The Divine wisdom made us loving each other”, says Rumi. This predestination divides world in parts, fixing love between them. Any single part is an inspired wish towards another one. God puts wish into man and woman in order to let the world to continue through their union; the woman wants the man because desire and its fulfillment determine both to improve themselves. But human love has two stages: “the primary love” that is the love to God and “the derivative from the first one” that is the love to the other. There are people who know that God exists and they direct their entire love to Him, and there are other people who believe that there exist separate objects of wish and they direct their love to them. But even the second kind of love proceeds from the love to God, and consequently it also leads to Him. For the Sufi there is only one beloved, and the other kinds of love are cold and unreal.

"In the eyes of the chosen, love is an unlimited eternal world, but you should not pay attention to what the common people see it as form and sensuality." (Divan, 18197)

Of the level of reason we have the unity of the understanding subject, perceived as understood form and understanding process, but in what concerns the level of love we have the same unity in the form of unity of love, loving and beloved.

One has to experience love and to understand it. But love exists not to be understood but to be materialized. Rumi focuses on love in order to evoke love in the heart of listener. The knowledge of heart is intuitive and it naturally goes to symbol.

"Someone asks: What is love?

I say: Do not ask for this! When you become identical with me you will understand!" (Divan, 29050-51)

"Choose love! Time without love is nothing. Love is aqua vitae, you should drink it to the lees by heart and soul!" (Divan, 11909-10)

Choosing love means to choose only the power which exceeds limits of reason and contradictions of knowledge. It means to choose that love which gives the safety and the knowledge that never on this or any other world could be something that does not present both the loving and the beloved.

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DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AS A FACTOR OF CULTURAL CHANGE

HRISTINA AMBAREVA¹

Abstract

This paper describes a research regarding the relation between Internet culture and elite-challenging political action. In the main focus of the research are values of the hacker culture and their transformation into the values of the information age. The research hypothesis of the study is that the Internet culture could be considered not only as a carrier of self-expression values, but also as a mediator between the revolutionary spirit of the counterculture of the late 1960s and the present day elite-challenging political activism.

The results of a small sample pilot social survey are described in the paper. It studies to what extent certain values, which are common for the counterculture and hacker culture, are supported by netizens today (young students from Romania and Bulgaria). The results of the survey are encouraging for the study of continuity between hacker values and netizens' values as well as the possibility the Internet culture to promote self-expression values and behavior consistent with them.

The survey design needs refinements. The research, on one side, could be repeated with a larger sample of respondents in both countries, or it could be re-designed for in-depth interviews with selected participants and experts.

Keywords: Internet culture, self-expression values, hacker ethics, elite-challenging political action, netizens, cultural shift, empirical research.

The article consists of three main parts. In the first part, I present the concept of my project and explain the reasons to implement the pilot survey research. In the second part, I review the main results of the survey and comment on their significance. The third part of the paper presents conclusions and discussion.

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I. Conceptual Frame: Research Problem, Main Concepts and Hypothesis

I.1. The Research Problem

Since the beginning of the new century, there is an unprecedented rise in the number of protests and social movements around the world. The growing intensity of these elite-challenging activities had been a subject of forecasts in 1979 by the political action researchers such as Samuel Barnes, Max Kaaze, Ronald Inglehart, who wrote that the late 20th century will face the spread of unconventional political participation through protests, boycotts, strikes, petitions and demonstrations (Inglehart 1971; Barnes at all. 1979). Presently, these prognoses came to reflect the global rise of social movements. These researchers suggest that the explanation for the withdrawal from the elite-directed political participation via elections and the increase of direct political participation through elite-challenging activities could be sought in the “unhappiness with the existing political agenda” (Barnes at all., 1979, 444) and the higher cognitive mobilization of the masses – more people having education and control over their life, more tools for mobilization and political participation (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002). In his work Inglehart analyzes the “cultural shift” in the developed western democracies from “values of survival” towards “values of self-expression” and this shift reflects the connection between economic changes, cultural values and political action (Inglehart, 1971; Inglehart, 1990).

Among the tools for civic and political activism today, the Internet seems to be the leading one – a network which facilitates the communication and mobilization of many people for the purpose of elite-challenging activities. However, far from being only a medium of dissemination of information, the Internet (I use the term here interchangeably with the “World Wide Web”) is also a complex cultural environment. It is an interactive and immersive virtual environment, which offers a whole new world where users can – and many do – spend a great part of their life. They not only use the Internet “instrumentally” for sending messages, shopping or checking the weather forecast, but they are also the creators of content and code. This complex environment generates the “Internet culture” which has its own specifics.

A very important feature comes from the profile of the population of the Internet. Internet users are predominantly young [between 15 and 44 years of age are 2/3 of Internet population, 53.2% are between 15 and 34 (Statista.com, 2015)], educated [in 2014 “Those with degrees still outweigh those without” (Murphy and Roser (2016))] and people with relatively good income, which follows from the high correlation between income and the Internet usage (Pew Research Center, February 22, 2016). These are the same social groups, which Inglehart described in his study as the people who are likely to hold “self-expression values” and also likely to engage in elite-challenging activities (Inglehart, 1990). The concentration of these people online is higher than their concentration in any real state and was the Internet a state, it would probably have had the highest Post-materialism index.

The research question of my project started from here:

Could there exist a relation between the high concentration online of so many people belonging to a “risky group” and the rise of the protests and social movements during the last two decades – a period which coincides with the development of the World Wide Web?

1.2. Correlation or Causality?

There are at least two possibilities, which could explain the relation between the Internet development and social movements: *correlation and causality*. The increase in the number of protests and social movements could be independent of the development of the global network. The advancement of neoliberal capitalism could be the mediator and the reasonable explanation of their simultaneous growth.

On the other side, causation is not impossible. Even as a “tool” for communication and mobilization the Internet provides a variety of opportunities for social activism. In order to approach the research problem, I shall go deeper into the concept of “Internet culture”, its founding values, and see if the combination of these values and attitudes with the purely technical features of the Internet as a tool for

communication of information and ideas could be considered a cause for intensification of anti-establishment ideas.

1.3. Internet Culture and Values of the Information Age

Which ideas and values can be associated specifically with the Internet culture? The most natural way to approach this question would be to look into the beginning of the Internet and the values of the people who actively took part in the creation of the information age – the IT specialists known as “hackers”. Following this approach, I have to bracket the present-day complexity of the Internet culture, which has grown almost as diverse and multilayered as the physical world, and will focus instead only on a very representative and crucial segment of the Internet culture – the hacker subculture. Hackers played a vital role in the digital world: they are considered the creators of the main symbols of the information age: the personal computer, the free operation system Linux and the World Wide Web (Himmanen, 2001).

In my analysis, I take into account the research made by Peka Himmanen (2001) and Steven Levi (1984). They write about hacker ethics and I rely on their argumentation about the existence and specifics of such ethics.

According to their studies, initially, the word “hacker” did not have the negative connotations it acquired after the 1970s. First hackers were young students in the 1960s, who gravitated around MIT and Stanford University computer labs. The word “a hack” was used for creative and innovative jokes, which demonstrated a higher level of technical difficulty. These early computer club communities have developed a common code of behavior (Levi, 1984). It would have gone into oblivion, had it not been that substantial contribution of the hackers to the information age.

The first description of the hackers’ values is done in the 80s by the journalist Steven Levi (Levi, 1984). He lists several main principles of the “hacker ethics”:

- Access to computers – and anything which might teach you something about the way the world work- should be unlimited and total.

- All information should be free.
- Mistrust authority – promote decentralization
- Hackers should be judged by their hacking, not bogus criteria such as degrees, age, race, or position
- You can create art and beauty on a computer.
- Computers can change your life for the better.

As the contribution of the hacker subculture to the information age was growing, so was growing the importance of their code of behavior. Some of their principles have moved from the hacker subculture into the mainstream culture and became values of the information society. Two principles of the hacker ethics seem to have entered completely and shaped the mainstream culture.

1.4. “Access to computers should be unlimited and total” developed into the “Digital inclusion for all” value

The principle of “accessibility” has been officially accepted as institutional policy by many states. For example, on the web-site of the European Commission one can find the principle

“Digital Inclusion for a better EU society”.

Yet, hackers are one step ahead. The Electronic Frontier Foundation supports *Open Wireless Movement* and encourages the subscribers to the Network to give free access to it, so a visitor in the district could access the Network (Electronic Frontier Foundation; Wagstaff, K. January 30, 2013). The free Wi-Fi zones, which got popularity in Bulgaria and many other countries around the world, are also a reflection of this idea.

1.5. “All information should be free” developed into the Free software value

The Free software value is of leading importance in hacker ethics and is a problematic value in culture today. It raises the questions about free

access to software and the status of ownership in the information age. The development of Free software principle has its milestones in projects like GNU operating system of Richard Stallman (1984), creation of

GNU General Public License and *Free Software Foundation* (1985), *Linux* creation (1991); *Open Source Initiative* (1998) of Erik Raymond and Bruce Perens, *Open Source License* and *Open Source Definition*; establishment of *Creative Commons* organization (2001).

Although free software and later Open source values are practically leading to the result of free access to the information about the code, the distinction between them comes from the motivation behind sharing the code. As R. Stallman explains the difference:

The two terms describe almost the same category of software, but they stand for views based on fundamentally different values. Open source is a development methodology; free software is a social movement. (Stallman, 2007-2016)

For Richard Stallman, the free software value was justified by social ethics. He writes:

For the free software movement, however, nonfree software is a social problem, and the solution is to stop using it and move to free software. (Stallman, 1998-2016)

On his blog, E. Raymond explains his support for the Open source by practical reasons. He writes:

To behave like a hacker, you have to believe that the thinking time of other hackers is precious – so much so that it's almost a moral duty for you to share information, solve problems and then give the solutions away just so other hackers can solve *new* problems instead of having to perpetually re-address old ones. (Raymond, 2001)

According to R. Stallman, the both “camps” exist within the free software movement, the definitions of “free” and “open” software are very similar, but the Open source “misses the point”, namely the ethical issue in the concept of “free software” (Stallman, 1998-2016).

The other principles of the hacker ethics, as described by S. Levy have partly entered into the mainstream culture, and partly stayed on the subculture level.

“Mistrust authority and promote decentralization” develops and sustains the antiauthoritarian pathos of the Network.

On his website the famous hacker Eric Raymond writes in the manual “How to become a hacker” (Raymond, 2001):

So to behave like a hacker, you have to develop an instinctive hostility to censorship, secrecy, and the use of force or deception to compel responsible adults.

This is a principle with serious and even life-threatening consequences for the hackers. Although human rights and freedoms in democratic countries are guaranteed by law and governments are expected to promote and defend them, hackers who follow the antiauthoritarian principles are often in conflict with the officials. On the web-site of *Wikileaks* one can read that the organization stands for “the defense of freedom of speech and media publishing, the improvement of our common historical record and the support of the rights of all people to create new history”. The site points to the fact that these principles are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and yet its co-creator Julian Assange is treated as a criminal by the US government and spends years living in the Embassy of Ecuador in the UK. This is a result of the anti-authoritarian activities of the web-site and its support for transparency because

“transparency creates a better society for all people” (Wikileaks).

Electronic Frontier Foundation, the famous hacker organization, stands for user’s privacy and free expression and writes on its website:

“We work to ensure that rights and freedoms are enhanced and protected as our use of technology grows” (EFF website).

Snowden case is another example of how anti-authoritarian values, which hackers follow, could result in a deep conflict between a democratic government (which is supposed to work for transparency and democracy) and a person who is really working against secrecy and surveillance.

The **“Hackers should be judged by their skills”** principle introduces the **meritocratic value**: people should be judged based on their merits and skills. This becomes a basic principle of popular culture today – in particular in video games culture. In the context of meritocratic view **“degrees, age, race, or position”** are irrelevant to the skills an individual can demonstrate, so this principle also makes strong point toward social equality and justice.

“You can create art and beauty on a computer” is a principle encompassing ideas about aesthetics of code. The beauty of code is described by John Markoff in terms of “simplicity” and “shortness” (Markoff, 2005). The best hackers are those who can write an executable code in fewer lines. This principle can be interpreted in other ways, as well, like *rehabilitation of play and importance of creativity in the information age*. Hackers can achieve their virtuosity only after many hours of writing and playing with code. Creativity and play are the most important part of their work and work and play are actually merged in their activities (Himmanen, 2001). By spending enjoyable time on their computers, they are able to produce many significant innovations, which are comparable to “works of art”.

“Computers can change your life for the better” is a principle, which can be interpreted broadly from digital inclusion value to “hacktivism”. On one side, *digital inclusion* is considered good, because *computers could change life for the better*. On the other side, a computer *by itself* cannot change anything. It is the individual who decides how to use a computer to change something for better or worse. So a wider interpretation of this value could be in terms of “active citizenship” and using hacks and computers for political and social causes.

1.6. Why Hacker Values Are What They Are?

Why information should be free, why “open source” and why “mistrust authority”?

There are authors who link the counterculture of the 1960s with hacker subculture (Markoff, 2005; Brand, 1995). According to them, the hacker subculture is influenced by the spirit of the 1960s and even more: the very revolution of the hackers (creating the personal computer) came as a result of the spirit of the counterculture of the 1960s. The underlying conviction of the authors above that hackers were a product of the counterculture is not so well developed, but it seems to be well justified from the point of view of values and philosophy. Below I present my arguments on the connection between hacker ethics and the principles of the counterculture movement.

Values of the counterculture movement and radicalization of youth in the 1960s are well studied by Ronald Inglehart. His theory is useful for my research as he describes the connection between changes in values and political action (Inglehart, 1971; Inglehart, 1990).

Young people who took part in the counterculture movement in Europe and the USA belonged to the baby-boom generations. They have grown up in relative prosperity and security and many of them supported the so-called “values of self-expression”. In the counterculture movement in the USA, lots of people joined the protests against the war in Vietnam. They wanted to experience a new lifestyle – to practice new forms of spirituality and extend their minds, to have sexual freedom and communitarian style of life. Young people were fond of the idea of sharing resources and took their big share of entertainment and drugs. Some of them were vegetarians and developed eco-lifestyles – extravagancies, which contrasted with the traditional and conservative American family values. The counterculture movement had strong anti-establishment, anti-bureaucracy pathos: some of its supporters were anarchists, regarding the state as obsolete.

Formation of the “New left” was part of the counterculture movement of the 1960s in Europe and in the USA. The New Left moved from the Marxist concept of social inequalities and class struggle towards resistance against new forms of oppression. The main priority of the movement became the struggle for civil rights of women and black people, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and etc. Among its leading political ideas were participatory democracy and decentralization.

Although there are variations of the descriptions of hacker ethics by Himannan and Levi, the principles of *inclusion* ("access to computers should be unlimited and total"), *free sharing of resources* ("all information should be free"), *anti-establishment calls* ("mistrust authority"), *anti-bureaucracy pathos* ("promote decentralization"), *the meritocratic principle and equity* (hackers should not be judged by "bogus criteria such as degrees, age, race, or position") are definitely close to the ideas of the counterculture movement.

Hacker culture had much in common with the spirit of hippie culture. According to Markoff they had actively experimented with "extending their minds" via video gaming and escaping reality by means of the computer world. In the 1960-s the most advanced university labs for computer sciences on the west coast had turned into arcade game zones (Markoff, 2005, 26). Markoff described the culture in the region of San Francisco as libertarian and bohemian and very different from the conservative and hierarchic spirit of the East coast culture. In the context of video gaming, experimenting with computers and bohemian lifestyle the idea of the personal computer had come to existence.

Liberty, creativity, "extension of mind", "escape from reality", communitarian spirit, cooperation and sharing, priority given to play and entertainment by the counterculture movement of the 60-s, and all this concentrated in the Silicon Valley, near to the big university centers, seems to have become a part of the personal computer revolution, as well. Brand (1995) identifies the second generation of young hackers in the 1970s – like Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak – as a generation which came from the counterculture. He also writes about the left or libertarian convictions of the hackers and their belief that the computer revolution would change the society towards a more democratic and decentralized community (Brand, 1995, 25). More than 20 years later, John Perry Barlow expressed his hacker philosophy in the "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace." Here he addressed the "governments of the industrial world" and denied them of legitimacy in the cyberspace. He declared the cyberspace a home of mind, free from the tyranny of the governments. In the "Declaration" the principles of "Internet without leaders" come very close to the hippie movement and its neglect to bureaucracy, tradition and established order (government) (Brand, 1995; Markoff, 2005; Roszak, 2000).

1.7. The conclusion of the first part of this research

The connection between hacker culture and the counterculture movement is important in terms of **values and philosophy**. Considering the relation, it could be suggested that the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s had echoed not only in fashion, art and lifestyle, but also had infiltrated the very roots of the information society – the global network.

If so, then digital inclusion could mean much more than being able to send an email or check the weather forecast. It could mean joining a cultural environment which **encourages self-expression values**: resistance against authority and tradition, support for innovation, personal freedom and privacy with all **politically significant implications** (for example, empowerment in political sense like raising cognitive mobilization, a concept Inglehart uses to describe the raising levels of education and participation in political discussions).

Research Hypothesis

Conclusions above are achieved as a result of a theoretical analysis and references to facts or experts' views. Therefore, some empirical support is considered necessary here in order to verify there is no incongruence between theory and reality. For that reason, I apply the conclusions from the conceptual part of the research as a hypothesis for the subsequent empirical "tests".

The hypothesis is the following: there are certain values which are common to the counterculture, hacker culture and netizens today and they are self-expression values; the Internet culture could be considered not only as a carrier of self-expression values, but also as a mediator between the revolutionary spirit of the counterculture of the late 1960s and the present day elite-challenging political activism.

II. The Survey Questionnaire – Design and Results

II.1. Design

The pilot survey research, presented in this paper, done as a part of the bilateral Romanian-Bulgarian project "Culture and Values in Late Modernity",

is the first module of a sequence of empirical works. As a pilot type of survey, it served the purpose to collect empirical information about important points of view concerning values and attitudes of digital natives and young netizens, to clarify the appropriate choice and structure of the questions and to facilitate the refinement of the questionnaire for empirical studies later. *The survey put to a test the hypothesis that young netizens in Romania and Bulgaria have shared values with hackers and the counterculture and these are self-expression values.*

According to Eurobarometer study from 2008, Bulgaria is the country with the lowest post-materialism rate in the EU (Eurobarometer 2008, 69) – as low as 2%. According to the same study, Romania has 3% post-materialism rate. In comparison, the leaders in PM index are Sweden and Netherlands with 23% and 20% of the population supporting self-expression values (Eurobarometer 2008, 69). According to Eurobarometer results, the support for self-expression values in the two Eastern European countries from the pilot survey could not be expected to be high, although it could be predicted that among young people it will have its highest rate. Accordingly, I expected that there will be a certain level support for self-expression values and attitudes among Romanian and Bulgarian students.

In the research, however, those values were explicitly associated with the Internet usage. Almost all of the questions were linked to the values of the hacker ethics, which are values of self-expression. This significantly differs from the design of the 4-item cognitive battery used by Inglehart and in the Eurobarometer survey. The respondents were asked exclusively about their perceptions, values, and experience in the digital society. It is interesting to know how this survey's results from a potential representative sample in both countries could compare to the results of the 4-item cognitive battery; however, this is out of the reach of the present study.

In the survey the students had to rate *statements* about values or practices of Internet usage and in most of the questions they were given a multiple choice (choosing one answer among several options; the following scale was usually applied: strongly agree – agree – neither agree, nor disagree – disagree – strongly disagree). There was a limited number of questions where up to three answers could be selected. The questions belonged to six main groups, covering four of the hacker values:

1. Digital inclusion
2. Open Source

3. Antiauthoritarian values
4. Decentralization
5. Active citizens

The meritocratic principle was not studied by the survey ("Hackers should be judged by their hacking, not bogus criteria such as degrees, age, race, or position"). The principle of "enjoyable work" ("You can create art and beauty on a computer") was studied by few questions, which will not be reported here as they require further consideration and refinement.

The survey was disseminated to university students from different fields of study – Humanities, Technical Sciences, Social and Life Sciences. All of the respondents belong to the so-called the millennial generation (age 20-35) and, thus, fall under the category of "digital natives". Altogether 41 respondents from Romania and 32 respondents from Bulgaria took part in the research. The survey was done online so that only people who had access to a computer, the Internet and possessed sufficient digital literacy could complete it. The questionnaire was created in Google Drive so that the respondents were able to answer it at a convenient for them time and location.

Questions were asked in the English language which is a second/third language for both groups of respondents and is the most popular language on the Net. As a result, the profile of the respondents is the closest to the ideal target group of the research – the netizen. Most of the respondents were active Internet users: around 70% (B: 68.8% and R: 73%) of them use the Internet more than 20 hours per week which means at least 3 hours a day. 100% of the respondents have a Facebook account and 85% in Romania and 87% in Bulgaria say they use it almost every day. They are quite efficient users, being able to download and manipulate a variety of digital content (images, text, video, sound) in multiple platforms and communicate and exchange information via social networks. All of the respondents create and upload original content, predominantly photos (more than 70% in both countries) and text (B: 53.1% and R: 65.9%). Only approx. 25% of the respondents do not participate in academic discussion groups. The rest participate with various degrees of being active.

The majority of the respondents were female students (B: 68% and R: 63%) from the Humanities and Social Sciences as well as Health and Community Services. As hackers are usually men from technical sciences, finding support for the hacker values among female respondents from Humanities and Community services will be of great contribution to the hypothesis.

II.2. Main Results

There are results in the pilot survey research, which show a high level of agreement about certain statements. When I use the indication “high” here, that would mean that more than 70% of the respondents in each country “agree” and “strongly agree” to the proposed statement.

I. “Digital inclusion for all” value is confirmed by the identification of the Internet as “useful” by 81.3% of respondents in Bulgaria and 92.7% in Romania.

In order to study the “digital inclusion for all” value, respondents were offered two groups of adjectives. The first group included the adjectives: *useful, trustworthy, independent, available, accessible, free, democratic, and safe*. The second group included: *unreliable, manipulative, corporative, unaffordable, closed, expensive, undemocratic, and unsafe*. Respondents were asked to select 3 among the 8 adjectives in each group, which best describe their perception of the Internet. The purpose of this question was to identify dominant features in the perception of the Internet.

Democratic

A very important adjective was “democratic”. Hacker’s idea about the Internet was to build the web as a democratic space: the system to be decentralized, with many nodes and with no leadership, no single government control and fewer possibilities for censorship. I included the keyword “democratic” with the purpose of understanding how many of the respondents would recognize the World Wide Web as a democratic space

and give priority to this adjective. Only 20% in Romania and about 10% in Bulgaria chose the option “democratic” to describe it. On the other hand, only 5% in Romania and 0% in Bulgaria said that it was “undemocratic”.

Useful

The leading positive adjective selected was “useful”. This choice is supportive for the hackers’ believe that “computer can change your life for the better” and “digital inclusion for all” value. Both respondents in Bulgaria and Romania agree on the usefulness of the Internet: B: 81.3%/R: 92.7%. There were several aspects of its “usefulness” studied by the survey. According to the results of the questionnaire, respondents use the Internet to seek advice on:

- *health issues*: B:87.1%/R:87.8%
- *moral issues*: B:51.6%/R:70%
- *emotional issues*: B:73.3%/R:70.7%
- *religious issues*: B:45.2%/R:61%
- *legal matters*: B: 71.9%/R:78%

The respondents also “agreed” and “strongly agreed” that using online materials is an important part of their education (B: 97% and R: 95%). Some of them have enrolled in or used materials from the open education online courses like MIT OpenCourseWare and similar (B: 43.8/R: 65.9%).

Agreeing on the usefulness of the Internet, respondents actually agree with the value of “digital inclusion for all”, “because computers are useful” in various ways.

While the respondents from Bulgaria and Romania slightly disagreed upon their choice of the three leading positive adjectives, they were in complete agreement upon the selection of the three negative key words. Thus, according to most respondents’ choice the Internet is **manipulative (B: 81.3%/R: 87.8%), unsafe (B: 65.6%/R: 73.2%), and unreliable (B: 62.5%/R: 65.9%)**. Apparently, most respondents were quite aware of the risks online, and 75% in Bulgaria and 85% in Romania agreed or strongly agreed that they **always compared the information they had read on a website with the information from other websites**.

These choices reflect a perception of the Internet which describes digital citizens with critical awareness, people who are quite ready to believe that doubt, personal judgment, and privacy are essential in the Internet usage. These convictions are a big step aside from naivety, following authority and believing in the top-down approach to truths. Together with the high level of agreement about the usefulness of the Internet, the selected keywords describe these netizens as people who question not the physical access to the Network or the prices of subscription, but the various displays of power – the purposeful manipulation (manipulative), the information noise (unreliable) and the insufficient protection of one's privacy, which could harm as much the online presence as the offline one (unsafe). Confirming this sensitivity to power relations is also the fourth negative choice in both countries – the key word “corporate”.

II.3. The Open Source value received an impressive support by 93.8% in Bulgaria and 92.7% in Romania.

In the digital world, software is a means of production. Basically, the essence of the Open source as a part of the free software movement is to make the “means of production” free and accessible for all. This is the social meaning of the hacker's revolution, which started in the 1960s and by now has changed significantly the business models on the Web. In the middle of the 1970-s, the Open source values caused the first big conflict between the free and proprietary software supporters, namely between hacker community and Bill Gates. The main argument on the side of the proprietary software was that no one would produce software on a professional level if one did not receive the corresponding remuneration for it.

When I asked the students **“Please, rate the importance of Open Source value (as compared to Copyright value)”**, I actually asked them to take a stance in this almost 50-year-old conflict between supporters of Open/Free software and pro-proprietary software companies. More than 90% of the students in the both countries answered that they thought of Open source as “important” or “rather important” for the development of knowledge and creativity.

The Open source value is a left idea. Sharing of resources is a basic principle of the counterculture movement in the 60s. When the World Wide Web was initiated (1989), Tim Berners-Lee created it as an open platform, to foster collaboration and innovation (WWWFoundation, 2015). So the very “base” the Internet is (still) built on and functions is neutral to the type of user (a big corporation or an educator) and doesn’t allow for “specialized services” and “class-based discrimination” (WWWFoundation, 2015). The openness and neutrality of the World Wide Web is actually not politically neutral and the fact that 90% of the respondents in the survey are likely to support Open Source and its implications for innovation is quite significant. However, it has important implications for democracy and political action as well.

II.4. Antiauthoritarian values

Although the Internet was not recognized as a democratic space, the opportunities for self-expression on the Internet received confirmation from more than 80% of the respondents and the very value of self-expression was also rated high: **“It is good that the Internet encourages self-expression”** received 68.8% support in Bulgaria and 70.7% in Romania.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate their support for several statements concerning rights and liberties on the Internet. The statements were meant to identify whether culture on the Web was perceived to be authoritarian. I asked about: freedom of speech, self-expression, transparency, control, and censorship.

When results of this group of questions were compared with the result about “democratic”/“undemocratic” character of the Internet (a question in the first group), they showed that the Internet was actually perceived as a democratic media. The indicators “freedom of speech”, “self-expression”, and “powerful platform against censorship” received a high positive rating.

The statement **“I believe that the Internet is the media which best promotes freedom of speech”** received the support of nearly 70% in both countries (68.7% in Bulgaria and 70.7% in Romania agree or strongly agree).

The statement **"I find that the Internet encourages self-expression more than traditional media"** received the support of 81.3% in Bulgaria (agree/strongly agree) and 87.8% in Romania (agree/strongly agree).

69.4% in Bulgaria and 68.3% in Romania agree or strongly agree with the statement **"I find that the Internet is a powerful platform against censorship."**

The sensitivity to power which the choice of adjectives in the first group of questions demonstrates in the perceptions of the Internet (manipulative, unsafe and unreliable) corresponds to the results from the statement **"There is less government/corporation control on the Internet in comparison to traditional media"** (B: 59.4%/R: 63.4%). This sensitivity is also noticeable in the support for the statement **"I am interested in the future of democracy"** (B: 68.8%/R: 78%).

II.5. Decentralization

The value of decentralization is approached in the survey by two indicators: selection of the "the best" democratic model and priority given either to the horizontal or to the hierarchic type of organization.

The question asked about the best democratic model was: **"Which answer most closely describes your understanding about 'the best' democratic model?"** The choice was among "direct democracy", "representative democracy" and "mixed model". The "representative democracy" option received a lower number of supporters (B: 21.9%/R: 22%) than "direct democracy" option (B: 37.5%/R: 34.1%). The mixed model was supported by 40.6% in Bulgaria and 34.1% Romania.

It is important to note that this question was intended to identify attitudes, which in itself could be emotional or unjustified by knowledge and arguments. As the answers dissipate around the three main choices, it is difficult to base a conclusion on these results. What could be commented here, with some degree of uncertainty, is that the support for the "pure" forms of representative democracy is comparably low.

In the next question the respondents were asked about the priority of the horizontal type vs. hierarchic type of organization in three spheres: in research and development (academic research and business innovation);

work organization (e.g., tendency of removing the middle management level in IT companies like Google); the third case was introduced as “managing complex situations” and the example was given by the refugee crisis.

The question asked was: **“The Internet facilitates networking, where people are not divided to subordinates and a leader, but feel more equal. What is your opinion about the applicability of networking in comparison to the hierarchic type of organization?”** This question was meant to measure the anti-bureaucratic, anti-hierarchical attitudes, which were typical of the counterculture of the 1960s and were popular among hackers.

In Knowledge and learning section the answers had the following options:

- 1) Horizontal networking gives a better system to exchange knowledge and facilitate learning.
- 2) Hierarchic organization gives a better system to exchange knowledge and facilitate learning

Here the respondents supported the horizontal networking:
B: 62.5%/R: 80.5%.

In **Innovation** section, the answers provided two options:

- 1) Horizontal networking has better potential to generate creativity and innovation
- 2) Hierarchic organization has better potential to generate creativity and innovation

Horizontal networking received the support of 78.1% in Bulgaria and 78% in Romania.

In general, respondents are more inclined to believe that horizontal networking has better potential to stimulate knowledge, learning and innovation, which is close to hacker ideas of production of knowledge (software) through sharing and horizontal collaboration, where skills and merits play the main part. This also reflects a more open and democratic process of production of knowledge, where ideas are not locked behind “walls” (copyright, patents, authorities, etc.) and are free for modification and improvements.

With regards to **work-projects** however, the support for horizontal organization decreases. The responses also differ significantly in Romania and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, most of the respondents gave priority to the

horizontal organization of work: 62.5 % *vs.* 37.5%. In Romania, the opposite was the case: only 43.9 % supported horizontal organization against 56.1% who supported the hierarchic organization.

This is most probably due to cultural differences, but it also reflects a certain concept of work, which unfortunately was not specified by the pilot questionnaire. The work-project could be a creative task or some tedious routine, performed by a team or individually, and personal involvement and position can vary to a great extent. Comparing the differences in the results of the “work project” and “knowledge”/“innovation” section, could mean that, at least to some extent, the concept of work-project is not associated with knowledge-based/innovation economy, or that knowledge-based/innovation economy is not associated with the horizontal organization.

In “**Complex situations (refugee crises)**” section the respondents of both countries answered in favor of hierarchic organization (B: 62.5%/R: 61%). Again the question was asked with the purpose of measuring the implicit subjective attitudes, not to identify the politically correct approach. The priority given to the hierarchic organization reflects a more traditional attitude and yet it seems that some challenge to those attitudes is posed by the rest of the responses choosing the horizontal organization.

II.6. Active citizens

How much can the Internet usage influence participation in civic and political events? Several questions in the survey were testing the hypothesis that the Internet is building habits of behavior and the collaboration for causes and active citizenship are being cultivated (trained) by the Internet environment.

Most of the respondents say they don't participate in online political discussion groups (B: 68.8%/R: 63.4%) and a small number of them “often watch/read online about life and work of politician” (B: 21.9 %/R: 26.8 %). Although they do not seek purposefully political information or discussions, still 40.6 % in Bulgaria and 51.2 % in Romania answered “yes” to the question “**Do you post on politically important or socially significant issues on Facebook (comments, links, photos, etc.)?**”.

More supportive of the idea that the Internet is building habits of behavior are the following results:

Around 40 % of respondents in both countries said they had signed more than 5 petitions online in the last 5 years.

Only 12% in Bulgaria and 10% Romania said that they **“never received an invitation on Facebook or another social networking site to take part in a protest, strike and other”**.

About half of the respondents in Romania and more than half in Bulgaria said they took part **in ecological causes on the Internet at least ones** (B: 62.5%/R: 46.3%).

To the question **“Have you taken part in creative projects on the Internet for free** 62.5% of respondents in Bulgaria and 48.8% in Romania also answered “yes”.

In addition, the majority of respondents consider **collaboration for causes** as an important or rather important experience (87.5%B and 90.2 % R).

Though it cannot be associated mainly with the Internet usage, it seems that many of the respondents are interested in information about political corruption. To the question **“Do you watch/read online about political corruption in your country?”** 68.8% in Bulgaria and 70.7% say “yes”.

Most of the respondents also agree or strongly agree that **“Young people should be more interested in policy and politicians”** (78.2 % B and 73.2 %R).

To the statement **“I want to see more moral in politics and politicians in my country”** 100% of Bulgarian respondents and 87.9% of Romanian respondents agree or strongly agree.

The results for Bulgaria are indicative of a process of radicalization of attitudes toward political elites, which makes the Millennial generations especially sensitive to the shortage of ethics in political governance. This is confirmed also by the predominant support to the statement: **“I feel angry about political corruption in my country”** (B: 93.8 %/R: 90.2%).

The last three questions about young people’s relation to politics, ethics, and anger show a high level of emotion concerning politics and politicians, which could be an indicator for politization or at least a precondition for more active citizenship.

When asked directly about how active citizens they are, the perception of the young netizens shows ambiguity. To the question

“What kind of effect has the Internet on your behavior? Do you think you are getting more active or more passive as a citizen in comparison to your parents' generation?” 53.1% in Bulgaria and 41.5% in Romania answered “more active”, 28.1% in Bulgaria and 39% in Romania chose “more passive” and 18.8% in Bulgaria and 19.5% in Romania chose “nothing changes”.

A positive result, indirectly supporting the hypothesis, is that the Internet usage was considered to be a source of empowerment in regard to knowledge, and 78% in Bulgaria and 75.6 % in Romania agreed with the statement that the “Internet helps to develop a problem-solving attitude”. “Empowerment with knowledge” is a critical characteristic which could lead to higher levels of cognitive mobilization – self-education and ability to orient in the complexities of politics.

III. Final Conclusions

The reviewed in this paper groups of results reflected views on four out of the six hacker values listed by S. Levi:

- Access to computers should be unlimited and total (Digital inclusion).
- All information should be free (Open Source).
- Mistrust authority – promote decentralization (Antiauthoritarian values and Decentralization).
- Computers can change your life for the better (Active citizenship).

The small sample of students who volunteered their participation in the pilot survey did show association with self-expression values related to the hacker ethics and part of the results are supportive of the initial hypothesis of the survey that young netizens in Romania and Bulgaria have shared values with hackers and the counterculture and these are self-expression values.

The results of the survey are encouraging for the study of continuity between hacker values and netizens' values, as well as the possibility the Internet culture to promote self-expression values and behavior consistent with them.

The survey design needs refinements. After this, the research, on one side, could be repeated with a larger sample of respondents in both

countries, or, on the other side, it could be re-designed for in-depth interviews with selected participants and experts.

Although faced with many challenges, this research draws its inspiration from the fact that the digital society is not irrelevant to the waves of protests around the world in the last two decades. In the virtual space, there is a critical concentration of people who hold self-expression values. If I follow the Inglehart's terminology, I have to assume that cultural shift is at an advanced stage in the digital society. Consequently, the rise of elite-challenging activities, participatory democracy ideas, calls for decentralization, the new left ideas about sharing of resources and opposing authority are not a surprising outcome in the course of the last twenty years.

Causation or correlation exists between the World Wide Web development and the rise of social movements? For sure, the undemocratic governments well know that if there is a revolution to start and threaten their power, the online space will play an important role. May be, this revolution has already started in the last two decades and questioned the model of neoliberal democracies, or may be the questions raised by the revolution of the 60s had never subsided.

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INTERVIEW

PROFESSOR MIHAELA POP IN DIALOGUE WITH PROFESSOR GABRIELLA VALERA

MIHAELA POP, GABRIELLA VALERA

Mihaela Pop (MP): Dear Professor Gabriella Valera, you are the organizer of this year's annual conference of the ISCH entitled *Gender and Generations*, which took place in Trieste from 18-22 July. You are an eminent professor of History at the University of Melbourne and the President of a new Research Centre dedicated to Youth Culture. We are glad to have the opportunity to talk with you about cultural history and its perspectives as well as about the special connections that could be explored between cultural history and other humanistic disciplines such as philosophy, the arts and cultural studies.

Q1. Could you tell us some of your conclusions about this conference, as you are the one who could best explain what the purposes of the conference were and how many of them were really achieved? As participants, we are indeed convinced that the conference was a real success, not only thanks to the impressive number of those who attended the event as speakers, and to the scientific level of the discussions, but also to the way in which the whole programme was set up. Could you explain to us why you chose these topics for an annual conference of the ISCH?

Gabriella Valera (GV): Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to think once again about the results of our Conference on Gender and Generations, emphasizing an aspect that was fundamental for me: "the way in which the whole programme was organized".

A1. When proposing the combination “Gender and Generations”, I imagined a significant contemporary theme and its cultural-historical aspects: the uncertain status of subjectivity, its relationship with identities, and the work of deconstructing traditional identities without backsliding towards other fictitious or serializing identities. In the last decades of the 20th century, “Gender Studies”, Gender History, Women’s History and important areas of Cultural Studies have provided interesting insights into the overview of the statutes of subjectivity; particularly, Gender Studies keeps promoting intense interdisciplinary work: from the question of the body to the problems of the relationship between gender and rights, with intersection between institutional history, economic history, the history of work (for example, certain important aspects of feminist legal theory), to the reflection on differences and conflicts, especially those concerning identity. Moreover, especially in Cultural Studies, the theme “young people” has generated a stream of reflection about “youth culture” as an antagonist “subculture” as compared to the one expressed in the societies taken into consideration. Analyses of “youth cultures” and the political and social history of the “young” have thus brought to light new subjects that are bearers of cultures, needs, capabilities, rights, relations, powers... I proposed “generations” instead of “young people”, to draw attention to old and new temporalities. “Generation”, as defined by Karl Mannheim in 1928, incorporates the historicist notion of a homogeneous time, the time of national progress. In our “global space”, time has been shattered into a series of internal encapsulations that oblige us to ask ourselves whether collective historical narratives are able to represent the trajectories of individual, temporarily inconsistent experiences. After all, the lectures given by Patrizia Dogliani, Guido Ruggiero, Jonas Liljequist and Alberto Mario Banti – which cut across eras and touched upon very different contexts of European history – showed how complex and diverse the logic of gender and of generations are, requiring each time a redetermination of the categories.

Something that I find very interesting emerged from the individual contributions, from the plenary lectures, from the methodological and historical-historiographical round tables, and from the macro areas of reference structuring the panels (institutions, rituals, identities, work,

power, body: the physicality that cultural history tends more and more to bring under its gaze constitutes the statutes of subjectivity; the “spaces” in which subjects play their “games” and spend their time (time was the topic of the 2015 conference) especially constitute the statutes of subjectivity. Spaces and times open or close, between institutions and movement, between regulation and life. Michel de Certeau wrote that space is composed of “intersections of mobile elements” and that in a certain sense it is the set of movements within it. Mobility and time variations qualify spaces and allow one to define the interpretative frame of reference, as it emerged from the interesting discussion on “decontextualization” during the final methodological round table, as opposed to a certain conceptual indolence that could bring one back to hermeneutical attitudes.

All of this characterizes cultural history. Perhaps its task is not to propose “strong” historiographical categories. However, its task and continuous vocation is to deal with other categorial and theoretical apparatuses, in its capacity as embodied history. Cultural history can show complexity in the apparent simplicity of minimal contexts. I would like to say that as a result of the conference, I also began to think that the “spatial turn” is perhaps one of the most significant moments of a large “cultural turn”, also because it crosses and confronts itself with a consolidated framework of political stories in which the spaces are essential: the spaces of politics, of states and of empires. However, these spaces can and must be revisited in their lively characterizations of small and large scales, of institutions and people, places and passages.

I believe that all this is a true interesting and not partial result of a Conference where the “risk” of a strong structure, built on categories that do not necessarily stem from cultural history, was welcomed with intelligence and curiosity by the speakers and put forward again in the debates with great vivacity.

MP: (Q2.) There were not only individual contributions with very challenging subjects, but also very dynamic talks during the round tables. We would like some details concerning the topics of two such round tables: Cultural History in Italy and New Perspectives in Cultural History. As it was pointed out, in Italy we can find various rhythms and paths of this domain in comparison to France, for instance, or other European countries.

There are both enthusiastic and reticent attitudes among Italian scholars. Could you comment on this? Which steps should be taken in Italian research on these topics?

GV: (A2) In Italy, the debate on “cultural history” began in 1905 in an essay by Benedetto Croce, who introduced himself into the wide debate that was taking place above all in Germany on the contrast between political and cultural history. Recalling that same essay, Croce proposed the subject again in 1924, when he spoke about economic and political history by comparing it with the legal-historical orientation of historiography that was becoming increasingly established at the time. In short, Croce came to the conclusion that cultural history resulted in an ethical-political history or moral history tout court. He even said that progress cannot be explained with the force of reason but rather with that of religion.

Why should we go back to Croce? Alessandro Arcangeli wrote very interesting pages on the developments of cultural history in Italy, recalling the weight that the history of ideas embodied in the biographies of great historians (he makes reference, for example, to the school of Turin) had in its journey, which was perhaps a bit slow and not entirely completed. Alongside the history of ideas, we find the history of the spread of ideas (of the book, of writing practices, of censorship...). In Italy, the great turning point of popular history came about with Gramsci’s philosophical thought. All this is linked to changes in the PCI (The Italian Communist Party): the uncertain use of the basic themes of “the people” united, patriotic and rooted in traditions), the masses, in which the tension between the masses and the leader prevails, or the partial and conflictual tension characterizing “class”. Books by Carlo Ginzburg were also involved in a very complex debate regarding the definition of “popular culture”. As Alessandro Arcangeli points out, Ginzburg was only appointed lecturer of “History of European Cultures” at the University of Pisa in 2006, about forty and fifty years respectively after the publication of “The Night Battles” (1966) and of “The Cheese and the Worms” (1976). As highlighted by the colleagues in the panel devoted to this subject, a certain difficulty in accepting cultural history endures to this day.

Which steps should be taken? – You ask me.

And I ask you: where to?

Each regional path leads towards a specific method and can contribute to the definition in progress of Cultural History “in the broadest sense of the word”, leading to awareness of a methodological, formal, and content nature: the materiality of sources, of practices, of intertwined discourses, of relationships and of languages and their performative contents. I believe that knowledge of the history of “cultural historiography” in Italy, as in the different regional contexts, provides a way in which to observe, revise, redefine and identify fields and methods of action.

MP: (Q3) Looking, for example, at Foucault, a philosopher who is primarily interested in extending philosophical research towards sociology, history, anthropology and political or cultural mentalities, what is, in your opinion, the relationship between Cultural History and philosophy (which philosophy? which philosophical domains?), how tight could this relationship be and what would the perspectives be for such double connected domains of research? We are asking you such a question since our journal focuses on philosophical research. Special attention is paid to the philosophy of culture and aesthetics, but also to the philosophy of values.

GV: (A3) Foucault has undoubtedly questioned every political history by rethinking power as practice of power, with all that this could mean with respect to the “modern” (in the sense of Western and European modernity) relationship between subject and power. He has thus also affected the disciplinary histories in which these issues were processed and normalized, together with their traditions and the way in which they are upheld.

I believe that a main path to follow is the one of disciplinary histories. Carefully recording the internal transformations of the disciplinary histories, statutes and basic categories means verifying their changes and turning points: the more through the comparisons between the disciplinary histories, the better these transformations, turning points, intersections and contaminations can be understood in their cultural meanings.

We must apply this method to what was historically called “Philosophy”, *i.e.* the disciplinary traditions that philosophy has generated: the various philosophies of law, of politics, aesthetic, ethical philosophies, etc. Thanks to the breadth and originality of his studies (at the time in which he wrote and proposed them), Foucault has become a fundamental point of reference, almost an icon.

However, the time has also come to recognize that establishing the issue of subjectivity and its statutes of power (and against power), his thought is to be reread as an expression of a crisis of paradigms involving many authors and many different elaborations of the same theme, and it concerns an entire great (cultural) history of knowledge. You speak to me about aesthetics and the philosophy of values. Dialogue is important: aesthetics has become a crucial reference point for historians, too. The theme of form and performance (which contains within itself the very notion of the form) is suggested. Just think of the current basis of legal aesthetics. As for the philosophy of values, values as relational facts are certainly constitutive of the cultural histories to which we, as historians of the Society, turn. Today, a philosophy of values, in the light of cultural histories, must call back into question even ethics itself as a discipline. Major issues build bridges between the different disciplines by accepting an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary challenge without ignoring disciplinary structures and methods.

A cultural-historical profile in the dialogue between the disciplines, a “cultural history” of disciplines may indicate to historians cultural-historical issues to deal with, fields of reference and paths otherwise not recognized. Once again: the “documentary materiality” of cultural histories is among the broadest you can imagine. The proprium of cultural history is to recognize the physical spaces of their substance and articulation, the reality of microcosms and macrocosms. Cultural history has several links with other histories and needs, for this reason, to monitor the relationships that it establishes with them.

MP: (Q4) Some participants suggested that the domain of the new average should have an important impact on future research in cultural history. This was mentioned especially during the round table organized on the last day of the conference, which took place in a very impressive

historical place, the Duino Castle. What is your opinion on this proposal? How much could these new media contribute to a better understanding of certain topics?

GV: (A4) I have no experience in this field. I can only say that the media (in the broadest sense of the term) may become the subject of cultural history since they are mediators of culture or of specific aspects of culture. But, in my view, this is not the most important aspect of the issue. In the language of the media, which the new media propose, the communicative function is replaced by a far more substantial “performative” function that changes the cognitive status of the interlocutor. Just think about the continuity and fragmentation of being connected, which leads to a multiplication of points of view: places from which to observe, senses of belonging to be saved, sudden definitions of an event in which we participate only through a “like” or “dislike”: but the event is immediately true. How can we think about a text or a hypertext on the basis of the offer made by the new media? How can the cultural historian deal with all this? I don’t have an answer. However, if Cultural History today responds to the need to welcome new historiographic inputs and to process them in a disciplinary way, the impact of the new media should lead us to reflect on the approach to sources and the creation of “events”.

MP: (Q5) You are the scientific director of a newly founded Research Centre for Youth Culture, which manifests very different interests connected to the young generations, their culture and their way of living. Could you tell us about the main purposes of this Research Centre? How much is this Centre interested in research on the cultural connection between the West and the East (of Europe)? We know that Trieste is a place of cultural and ethnic interferences. Does this Centre promote such intercultural research?

GV: (A5) The International Study and Documentation Centre for Youth Culture (iSDC) collects the results of actions through which, for many years, I have promoted the cultural production of “youth” scholars, artists and social workers in various areas and with different languages

(whether artistic, literary, performative or reflective). By organizing competitions and forums (in particular the World Youth Forum Right to Dialogue), I have created a network that has reached up to 90 countries worldwide and has linked thousands of young people.

However, some clarifications must be made.

"Youth culture": our centre needed a name, but it should immediately be said that "youth culture" is not an abstraction. Rather it is the culture expressed by young people according to an "age group". No more and no less. An age group roughly corresponds to experiences of a certain type. Working life is generally not structured, research is not yet formalized, information tools and life conditions change. Among "young people" there are differences in accordance with places, stories and projects. All this makes intergenerational dialogue important. "Youth culture" is (perhaps) the most intrinsically subject to change. The heart of the work set by the iSDC lies in the continuous comparison of elaborate and normalized scientific paradigms and the not completely formalized generative capacity of a certain culture of which young people – especially in our historical period – are bearers. The Centre promotes, studies and is willing to provide documentary evidence by setting up a telematic archive. The specificity of our work consists in proposing contemporary issues – we would dare say the contemporary issue – and rethinking them in the light of the necessary cultural-historical profile that "young people" – but not only young people – usually ignore. It is a dialogue among histories/stories even more than a dialogue between cultures. Each code seems to be inadequate for the representation of what is happening and prompts us to exercise a continuous redefinition and a continuous reorientation that eventually reshapes the bigger picture. Accepting the challenge of this movement is a great intellectual effort of our time.

And I come to the dialogue between the "two Europes": it is historically evocative and deeply felt, especially by the participants in our initiatives who come from Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In those areas, the sense of a historical fracture and of an unachieved cultural recognition is particularly intense. The Centre keeps track of this aspect and integrates it into analysis of the contemporary issue as experienced by younger generations and as a feature of a historical

intergenerational relationship. In addition, the Centre aims to work specifically on these points by recruiting into its Scientific Committee scholars from this area of Europe. Everything depends on how the Centre will succeed at growing. It is born from an opening, without neglecting the scientific form of elaboration and verification. That being said, we believe it can have a significant role and a great history.

MP: Thank you Professor Gabriella Valera for your answers and for the very interesting conference you organized this year in Trieste.

GV: Thank you again for interviewing me, and thanks to all the participants in the July conference, to the colleagues who helped me in organizing the conference and to the staff that welcomed our guests and gave them the opportunity to feel, at least a little, the “soul” of Trieste and our territory.

ABOUT PROFESSOR GABRIELLA VALERA

Professor of History and Critics of Historiography- Department of Humanities-Trieste. She was visiting scholar at several universities and institutions abroad (Max-Planck-Institut fuer Geschichte of Goettingen, Max-Planck-Institut fuer Rechtsgeschichte of Frankfurt, Herzog-August-Bibliothek of Wolfenbuettel, Herder-Institut of Lipsia, Institut fuer Europaeische Geschichte of Mainz, City University of New York, Law School at the Harvard University, South Bank University of London, Trinity College of Cambridge). In the year 2013 she has promoted the constitution of an “International Studies and Documentation Centre for Youth Culture” by the Department of Humanities of the University of Trieste. She is now director of the Centre. After early researches into the history of ancient historiography she has turned her research activity on the history of modern and contemporary historiography, on the problems of the theory of history and on interdisciplinary research directions aiming at identifying the disciplinary status of the sciences concerning the moral-historical world in their relationships. Ultimately she is working about the “Cultural History” and its re-orientation on the background of its History.

IN HONOREM

PROFESSOR ION IANOȘI

Ion Ianoși (1928-2016), Professor Emeritus at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy, has recently passed away, last year. Professor Ianoși was a tremendously influential philosopher, working across a broad range of fields, including aesthetics, philosophy of culture, Russian literature and cultural studies. The editorial board of the journal decided to create permanent heading *in honorem*, in which articles and studies of Professor Ianoși will be published after translation, in order to preserve his memory and the accuracy of his arguments in our students' and readers' consciousness.

***On Beauty*, by ION IANOȘI**

Text Translated from Romanian to English by
MIHAELA POP

Some Words about the Text and Its Ideas

The text about Beauty belongs to the work *Sketch for a possible aesthetics*, written and published by Professor Ion Ianoși in 1975. It is an extended study of aesthetics exposing some fundamental topics. The work was conceived to be a general presentation of what was intended to be developed later on as a complete work of aesthetics. Unfortunately, this plan was not accomplished. However, this Prolegomena reveals a deep thought and a thinker who likes to analyze aesthetics aspects in a

dialectic manner discussing not only the positive, optimistic sides of each aspect but also the negative ones, trying to follow the building of a concept from many perspectives in order to offer a larger image on that concept's meanings. The author considers that only in such an elaborated and comparative way, the aesthetics concepts could be better understood and applied to the new and challenging situations generated by the culture and society of the 20th century.

The work starts by a series of *Questions* which indicate the main topics which are to be discussed and which are presented in a problematizing manner. This introductory chapter reveals the confusion generated by the 20th century civilization which diminished significantly the boundaries between aesthetic and extra-aesthetics, between usefulness and aestheticism causing many complications in the understanding of concepts' meanings. This is due on one side to the continuously developing relativism of artistic criteria and also, on the other side, to the increasingly great number of artistic manners of expression.

The unique, the work and the artist are considered main concepts that could reveal the changes in aesthetics meanings, caused by the contemporary civilization.

The author points out the dilemmatic condition of the contemporary art. Today, there is no more a unique definition of art due to the fact that art itself seems to have lost its unique, classical identity. We can remark here a slight Hegelian influence which does not however speak about the "death of art" but only about a dilution of its clear and strong characteristics which were active during the classical period of art. In the 20th century art, there is such a diversity of manifestations that even the word "art" seems to have lost its traditional meanings. Can we now make a clear distinction between what is art and what is not, between an art object and industrial objects? In his answer, Professor Ianoși insists on the difficulty of doing such distinctions from a theoretical point of view. He remarks a specific process of interference between art and day to day life which can also create confusions. Then, art itself in its fundamental meaning is however confusing as it is based on its *uniqueness* and, in the same time, on its *totalizing character* as the work of art is unique, unrepeatable and each work is in the same time an entire universe as a totalizing world.

Another confusing situation: how can a work of art as a totalizing universe be in the same time a “finished”, “closed” product and also an “open” one, making an endless series of interpretations possible? How can it be in the same time “closed” and “opened”?

The author also insists on the distinction *aesthetic – artistic*, mentioning that the aesthetic dimension has a wider area of action which finally also makes possible the extension of artistic manifestations. In the same time, the aesthetic is in fact beauty and beauty has nowadays a wider meaning. Hence, beauty understood as aesthetic value, includes a wider universe than the artistic one. In this meaning, beauty represents a particular domain of axiological ontology as it supposes a relationship between existence and meanings, between objectified products and subjective life.

Taking into account this larger domain of action of the aesthetic value, one can easily admit that there are aesthetic qualities *outside* the artistic domain and these qualities are present only partially in objects which are not intended to be artistic, and are mixed up with other qualities as the useful, the functional, etc. The main domains of non-artisticity which show aesthetic characters are, in Professor Ianoși's opinion, *the nature, the social relations and the work*.

Beauty is also one of the spiritual values and thus it is a sign of humanity. It has a meaning only for human beings who are capable to perceive and understand it. Thus beauty can be defined by taking into account the entire process of civilization, spiritualization of man idea which is also based on Hegel's theory. As we can see, beauty acquires a very large realm of application being characteristic for the human being and human production. It is extended outside the artistic domain to human relations and even nature. This proves that Professor Ianoși separates here from Hegel's theory as he includes also nature within the domains where beauty is present. As we know, Hegel considers only the human spiritual products as belonging to the domain of beauty. However, beauty has a specificity: it is the only one value which is “phenomenal” in opposition to the other spiritual values which are “substantial”.

If we consider beauty as the object of art or as the aesthetic value *par excellence*, it should appear in a concrete and individual manifestation which is the work of art. In this case the connection between the phenomenal level and the substantial one is very clear and necessary.

Beauty is thus understood as the “significant concreteness” (objectified product) containing the “maximum concreteness *within* and *through* a maximum significance”. This is due to the fact that we *think* the aesthetic value by *feeling* and *perceiving* the work of art at its surface which is a meaningful surface or appearance as N. Hartmann mentions in his *Aesthetics* and Professor Ianoși always points it out in his work.

Reading the text, one can discover another specific characteristic of beauty: all the other spiritual values have an abstract character, being under the domination of abstract and general concepts while art is centered on individuality. A clear distinction between *law* (as general norm applicable to many individuals) and *case* (as individuality) should thus always be considered. The author uses this distinction analyzing the relationship between art and science (beauty – truth), art and religion (beauty – sacredness), art and ethics (beauty – good).

Another domain where beauty is also present is the realm of functionality, of active life and usefulness. The author points out that beauty has to be meaningful as it is a human spiritual product but it has also another character due to its concreteness, it is “naturally beautiful” which supposes the fact that the artistic creation should be so adequately expressed that it is perceived as “natural” in its artificiality. That is why beauty is the *natural, real* and *vital form* (expression) of spirituality.

All these aspects reveal another characteristic of art: its “impurity”, says Professor Ianoși. This “impurity” marks this double condition: it is in the same time spiritual *and* sensitive, sensorial, phenomenal *and* substantial, melting together the transcendence of concrete reality to the immanence of an individual reality.

One can remark that this text contains some allusions and citations of texts belonging to Marx, Engels and Lenin. It was a political imperative of the time to use such texts. However, the author succeeds to meaningfully use those passages which were really useful in the context and did not look like simply imposed citations.

We can also remark that the text offers a wide perspective of aesthetic problems which are treated in their relationship with other values or in connection with aspects that are not usually inserted in a study about aesthetics. This proves the wide perspective in which Professor Ianoși developed his research. The topics discussed and

especially the way of raising problems and the answers offered by Professor Ianoși stimulate even today our interest. In fact, each problem referring to beauty and its meanings could be re-discussed today as many aspects of art only mentioned by Professor Ianoși 40 years ago seem today to be more concrete, contemporary indeed especially the above mentioned *dilution of art*, its interference with the realm of functionality and usefulness or the relation beauty – nature as it is discussed today in what is called *land art* or the concept of impurity of art which is also very actual if we take into consideration the great variety of contemporary artistic manifestations.

The text offers a historical image of the manner in which aesthetics was studied, and the fundamental concepts discussed. Professor's Ianoși personal contribution to individual analyses is major. He succeeded in unveiling the rich meanings of topics accepted and discussed by those directions of research encouraged by the political regime and ideology of the time but also developed his research to a wider range of domains of investigations. He used an impressive list of bibliographical texts which could be associated to various directions of research and he applied them to the analysis of a great number of works of art belonging to all the major arts (music, literature, paintings, sculpture, and architecture) and to many cultural epochs. This proves his large and profound cultural knowledge. We try to mention some names of philosophers whose works and theories were applied to this study in order to reveal not only the wide cultural and philosophical knowledge of the author but also to suggest which were the fundamental names and theories which were taken into consideration during the communist historical period in Romania.

Here we mention: Plato, Aristotle, N. Hartmann, T. Vianu, G. Lukacs, E. Burke, Al Baumgarten, E. Cassirer, B. Croce, M. Dufrenne, G.W. Hegel, I. Kant, R. Ingarden, Edm. Husserl, G.E. Lessing, Th. Lipps, A. Gramsci, A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, K. Marx, Fr. Engels, V. Lenin, Lev Sestov, V. Sklovski, E. Uitz, G.B. Vico, I. Volkelt, W. Worringer, H. Wölfflin, W. Wundt.

There are also several artists and arts we need to mention: L. Aragon, J.S. Bach, H. de Balzac, L. van Beethoven, Max Bense, C. Brâncuși, A. Camus, I.L. Caragiale, L. Blaga, M. de Cervantes, Cicero, S. Dali, F. Dostoievski, M. Eminescu, W. Faulkner, S. Freud, A. Gide, N. Gogol, O Goga, El Greco, Homer, Fr. Kafka, Leonardo da Vinci, Longinus, J. Milton, B. Pascal, P. Picasso,

Quintilianus, J.Ph. Rameau, Rembrandt, Saint John Perse, R. Schiller, A. Schonberg, Fr. Schubert, I. Stravinski, Lev Tolstoi, I. Turgheniev, V. Van Gogh.

The text itself is written in a dynamic way, as the ideas follow one to the other quite rapidly. This succession does not diminish the role of solid arguments developed for each concept. There is a beauty of the text itself, an intellectual beauty assured exactly by this succession of ideas and arguments. The analyses of various works of arts are very pertinent even though they are not extended. The author points out exactly what is the most significant from a certain perspective helping the reader to reach a better understanding of the aesthetic concept and of the argumentation itself. The words are very carefully chosen and the author practices a characteristic interest for their various meanings using impressively especially antonyms in order to prove more clearly his theory. This method of writing assures a special grace or charm of the texts which stimulates the reader who has a feeling of an intellectual sparkling dialogue with the author of the text he reads.

MIHAELA POP

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Professor Mihaela Pop received a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Bucharest in 1999 and a second one in Comparative Literature from the Lyon III University in 2008. She specialized in philosophy of culture, aesthetics, ancient philosophy, art history and byzantine philosophy and culture. She has been also working on topics at the intersection between cultural studies and philosophy from the perspective of moral, religious and aesthetical values. Professor Pop recently coordinated the international research project "Church and Culture in Romanian and Bulgarian History. The Future of Religion in the Balkans". In addition, she has been developing the academic cooperation between the Faculty of Philosophy and the University for Fine Arts in Bucharest. Professor Pop is a member of CCIF, of the Centre for Medieval Studies (a joint project of the Faculties of History, Foreign Languages and Philosophy) and of the Centre for the Study of the Imaginary.

ON BEAUTY¹

1. The autonomous methodological combination, between a general axiology and another one, aesthetically more specialized, reveals our opinion – which we are going to develop in the following pages: the aesthetic value represents *the most general special value*, a specific extension or a particular doubling of the humanized *totality*.

The human body and soul, the industrial object of immediate utility, architectural and urbanistic, the feast and the “theatre”, nature, humanized directly or as a human medium; respectively the sight and the hearing, the sense of touch and the taste necessary to their production and reception – thus each domain and example mentioned above pleaded in an equal measure not only for general creative powers but also for particular aesthetic ones. This is a coincidence of definite significance for methodology and theory, a coincidence which justifies us in defining beauty in a fundamental connection with the entire process of humanization and its direct extension.

In order to propose a first definition, we shall say that beauty (understood as synonymous to the aesthetic value itself) should be understood, in our opinion, as the *significant concreteness*, on condition that the maximal significance be perfectly united *with* and melted down *within* (we point out again: implicated, absorbed, melted within) the *maximal concreteness*. In other words, the “spark” of beauty is generated by the over tensioned connection between the pole of major meaning and the pole of major sensitivity – between “purpose” and “case”. As far as this specific voltaic arch is at least up to a point specific for any process of humanization, during which man becomes capable to create and to continuously perceive interesting objects, richer in their objectuality and more interesting for his needs, diversified, refined and more adequate – at least two consequences undoubtedly emerge from this: the possibility that each process of humanization could reach the level of beauty creativity and the difficulty of discerning between the beautiful object and the other objects (a situation which is similar to that

¹ Chapter 3 from Ion Ianoși, *Sketch for a possible Aesthetics* (Bucharest: Publishing House Eminescu, 1975), pp.55-86.

referring to the aesthetic subject and its tendencies). This last difficulty derives from the already mentioned possibility, the lack of determination of the borders between what could be but it is not yet aesthetic, and what has already become aesthetic; by the way, the lack of precise determination between aesthetic and is also supplied by the same source.

As, if we were to ask ourselves when we reach that point at which the aesthetic potentiality becomes aesthetic reality, we should admit that for such a vague (and rich) domain we could not point out unfortunately (or happily), anything else than this indestructible, co-defining and co-substantial communion between sign and meaning, form and content, appearance and essence, individual and general, fact and norm, sensible and over-sensible; communion achieved under the domination of an emphasized expressivity (how much emphasized?) and of its consequences similarly emphasized (how many, meaning what?). The beauty is the significant phenomenon, in its compulsory phenomenal hypostasis as well as in its profoundness specific to this phenomenality, profoundness which "overflows" it, penetrating all its components, elevating it in its immediate existence. There is no distinction between the phenomenal and the essential "layers"; beauty grows just due to this absence, as the extremes interpenetrate each other, annihilating the independence of the two sides and stimulates them reciprocally. This process of establishing the limits of the aesthetic beauty has defining attributes. This can be proved by the fact that the aesthetic value has qualitative differences in comparison to other values: the one and only aesthetic value is phenomenal, being in such a way con-figured (through the figure!) that its value is assured by phenomenality, and without it, the aesthetic value cannot exist. All the other values are, on the contrary, *substantial*, only incidentally exemplified *through* and *on* a phenomenon. The essential act of their knowledge supposes to know their essence. Essential in the case of the aesthetic value – thus also for arts – are instead, the appearance and the process of appearing, without which the essence does not exist and cannot be thought.

We think of all values by means of our intellectual-theoretical powers; the aesthetic value is the only one which we think by feeling it, we understand it only when we live it, whose depth we discover at its surface concretely developed and concretely measured, the only one

value which we think through seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and feeling. Its status determined an adequation of its reception, at the level of each sensorial organ, sense enriched by certain specific intellectual re-actions but going on acting however further in its sensorial identity. The same adequation is present through the “aesthetic feeling”, “the artistic taste”; they catch the general meanings which are hence repeatable in an unrepeatability which is spontaneous, individual or consciously individualized.

Thus the aesthetic and artistic receptivity appeals constantly to emotions as the affectivity is situated within this psychological area on an osmotic-intermediary position between the inferior feeling and the superior reason; because in this particular area the “superior feelings” are born; through them the feeling of unrepeatable surfaces and the thought of repeatable depths join together firmly in a syncretic assimilation.

This unification is adequate to the ‘living corporality’ of the aesthetic object. The adjective is subordinated to the substantive which is the basic (*princeps*) term which the adjective colors in shades and differences. This explains the fact that we had a lot more to say about the human body than the human soul, which is more uncertain, and which becomes aesthetic only if it is incorporated in situations, actions, customs, rituals, etc. We also used the example of the town with a soul integrally incorporated, and which became aesthetic due to this superior corporality, and is adequately felt by its inhabitants or its visitors.

In contrast to the ideal character of other values, that of the aesthetic value always imposes through its direct or indirect, real or just pretended materiality: one which is ideally enlightened of course, and whose interiority is however unveiled towards the exterior in a necessary and constant manner.

Beautiful is thus “the deep surface” to which, when we refer, we are “interested” in the figure, color, dimension of the appearance, together with their inner “soul” as well, in fact, not inner but expressed within the “surface” of the object. Expressions are always aesthetic: the appearance, the face, the façade (the architecture helps us again). This is the reason for which we considered the “style” an aesthetic notion *par excellence*: it points out especially the way of the appearance, the characteristic face – of a man (directly or metaphorically), of a town, of a product, of a literary or artistic work.

2. If the assertion about the abstract generality of all the values, excepting the aesthetic value is correct, it can be confirmed firstly in comparison to the scientific truth, to the ethic value, the religious sacredness and even to what is useful from an economic point of view. These are all substantial values which should not use the individuality, the phenomenal and concrete individualization, except in an auxiliary manner.

A. In the history of the modern and contemporary aesthetics, the most used comparison is that between *beauty* and *truth*, between *art* and *science*. It is justified of course by the clear way of attesting the above mentioned proposition – even if this relationship has the power to also reveal other decisive oppositions as that between the process of scientific “*de-anthropomorphization*” and the art “*anthropomorphism*”; these oppositions derive either from the opposition we consider as a central one or the one they are correlated to.

The proof is the available comparison between anatomy and sculpture, between the analysis of a theoretic body “mortified” or dead in the proper sense and the re-synthesized body, practically “re-born” be it only in stone, marble or bronze. In the first case, the abstract laws “*de-anthropomorphisize*” the object; in the second case – its new existence reconfirm the anthropocentrism.

Indeed, in any “anatomy lesson” except the one painted by Rembrandt, in order to describe a muscle of the arm, the professor of anatomy will isolate it from the entire body and will analyze it as it functions within all the human bodies, with no exception caused by the slight possible deviations from case to case. He will analyze, in other words, the “abstract and abstracted muscle” of each of us – in fact not the muscle itself but the law of the muscle. From the very moment when students understand his lesson they will no longer need that muscle from that precise dead body (corpse), which was the accidental illustration of a necessary law of nature. And when students will become doctors at their turn, having to establish the diagnostic for an illness of a certain patient, through and over the individual case (but of course in its interest), they will look for the general laws of any sickness, the global frame in which the individual case could be integrated and through which it could be explained. Expressing these ideas as clear and

simple as possible, we shall say that the patient remains an “example” redundant by itself – an assertion which is not at all offending as far as the sick man could be cured if the doctor could establish its “class” and “superclass” (in which it could be classified). The main interest for the individual case is an individual human characteristic of the doctor, obviously appreciated for its value by the sick patient; but the doctor’s interest as a diagnostician regards the general cause of the sickness and its possible ways of cure. The drugs are, at their turn, produced in series, not for each sick person but for the sickness typology. These series, by subtle combinations, succeed in finally covering the “case”. Giving to the patient the various generally-valid drugs in necessary proportions, the doctor succeeds in finding just the curing combination the sick person needs to recover...

Coming back to the initial comparison, we shall discover that the sculptor uses a manner which is both synthetic and concrete, opposed to the insulation and generalization (even though sculptors first take anatomy lessons, the anatomy science). The sculptor will be interested about *this* muscle – of *this* arm – of *this* man; it follows the insertion of the part into the entire whole which can be only individual. The sculptor will not be interested in the “abstract muscle” of the science but by the “entire concrete body” of life. He will not follow “the law of the muscle” but “the phenomenality of the body”. The purposes and the means are reversed: in science the case was a pre-text; in art it becomes *total* (the whole). In theory, the example was used in order to get to the law; in practical activity, *it is* the law, the single possible law. The theoretical lessons of anatomy are interchangeable – Rembrandt’s *Lesson of anatomy* is unique: the details belong to a singular totality!

Art and science separated in order to achieve a better attachment to the dual status of the object, exterior and interior, aleatory and also necessary, apparent and essential too, phenomenal and substantial in the same time. Science goes inside the essence, art creates a new appearance (expressive, integrated, entirely covering, hence in an individual but generalized manner). Science discovers the *essence of the phenomena*; art gives birth to the *essential phenomenon* (this supports the remark about the domination of the subjective aspect). The art perceived the essence *within* the phenomenon, through a movement which does

not separate *from* the phenomenon; this latter, the phenomenon, is the most important, (above all the others). Science is more analytical, it is knowledge step by step: it passes from the exterior to the depth and as it discovers the law, it eliminates the examples, acts which were used before setting down the law. Art is synthetic, is "total": sensitivity is the first in art kingdom, a sensitivity in which the reason is alive; but the feeling is decisive, the feeling imbued with reason; it totally lives though the fact of being viewed, heard, and represented within its proper essentiality. Science is "secure", "solid", "calm", "essential"; art is "moving", "playful", "anxious", "apparent" – as it appears and expresses the depth *through* and *within* its appearance, it grasps the profoundness due to the foam accumulating on the top of the waves. Science is more profound but poorer (as univocal), art – more "superficial" but richer (as ambiguous). This because, as Lenin noted in his *Philosophical notebooks*, when reading Hegel's *Science of Logics*: "the law, any law, is tight, incomplete, and approximate", "the phenomenon is richer than the law"; "the phenomenon is the integrality, the totality, the law is only a part".

The artistic creativity is spiritually complex, but antinomic and ambiguous: art produces through a process of individuation, it achieves a process of abstractization on the concrete-individual, it uses the reason within feelings and emotions. The science man analyzes and reaches a general level of knowledge in a calmer, reasoned, solid, objective manner. The artist achieves totality and individualizes in a more nervous, direct, touching emotionally, subjective manner.

Being too "geometrical", these comparisons do not intend to impose the impression of certain fatal oppositions: double meanings can be reunited, "the essence of the phenomenon" and the "essential phenomenon" support and complete each other reciprocally; in our century more vigorously than during any other time. We are neither interested now in the collaboration of the conscience forms nor in the particular situation of each art or each science, having versions and multiple differences within the same typology. We only intended to point out that main polarization capable to grasp a larger distinction between the *theoretical* analysis and the *aesthetic* evaluation and to simplify the condition of the following distinctions between the aesthetic value and other values which are largely connected to the scientific and theoretical value.

B. Taking into account this meaning, any connection established between aesthetic and ethic no matter how normal it would look like, between the *ethic principle* and the *aesthetic fact*, an obvious separation will always be there. The idea of good is always discussed in its abstract generality, beyond the individual situations, manifestations and particular cases; the aesthetic phenomenon attributes meaning and purpose to itself. A virtuous man is the one who subordinates himself to certain norms (unanimously accepted for the moment), to certain „tables of laws”, historically sedimented. The restrictive moral principle “do not steal” does not explain when, how, what, at what age, in which season or at what time, forcing the entrance door or climbing through the window, etc.; the legislator or the judge, as far as they will take into consideration the concrete, individual conditions or the particular “circumstances” either aggravating or palliating the theft, will do this in order to establish the right cause, combining as precisely as possible a certain number of abstract paragraphs which would be able to cover as completely as possible the analyzed event – in a way very similar to the doctor’s diagnosis we mentioned in the other example. And we should not be confused by the fact that certain precepts have a “concrete and historical” characteristic as they tend to have universal validity: the localization in time and space, in strict connection with social structures and class interests does not modify the principal substantiality of any moral norm or juridical legislation.

In contrast to the good, beautiful is the individual, the case, the fact. It can also be included, of course, in structures ever larger and larger, and this is why we evoke the “laws of beauty”. However, these are only theoretical laws, studied by theoretical disciplines and if we choose to speak rigorously, these are not laws *of* beauty but laws *about* beauty. Abstract is the idea about beauty; beauty itself remains concrete always and for its entire existence. Women can be virtuous under specific historical conditions and taking into account present social imperatives; we do this characterization at the plural, by means of global characteristics and no proving example is necessary. Beautiful can be this woman with her incomparable charm, with her gait, aspect, look, with her hair, mouth, voice, manner of walking, her gestures; one can remark how the aesthetic particularizations always need sensitive

(exterior) characterization. As for the rest, supposing the "Southern" woman beauty or the "Nordic" one, the "aristocratic" or the "rustic" one, the "Spanish" or "Swedish" beauty, all are only theoretical typologies.

C. A little more difficult seems to separate beauty from sacredness and respectively, religion from art. Their incompatibilities, not only historical, but also substantial are clear on the plan of their gnoseologic purposes as well as on their practical and social functionalities and functioning: art becomes only incidentally and accidentally "the opium for people" and then it risks its proper condition as art. However, we cannot forget the frequent alliances between religion and art; paintings, cathedrals, oratorios, famous books, eternal works of art dominated by religious representations. The basic problem is, in our opinion just this, and the dramatic question that theologians should not obliterate – if the representations can be religious, if religion can represent ideas without committing an involuntary treason, if the sensitive immanence which it uses is not however structurally incompatible with the abstract transcendence which religion looks for programmatically.

The Biblical prohibition of making silver or golden gods is adequate to the premises of a monotheist religion, the monotheism being the consequent hypostasis of religion itself. Not making carved images means not making them of gold, silver, rocks or marble, colors or wards, images of either gods or other divine creatures having divine attributes. In this case, to substitute Moses to Michelangelo's sculpture and even to Michelangelo himself redefined as the ancient sculptor of the moral Law, perfectly justified in Thomas Mann's laic narration, remains a regrettable poetic license in a strictly religious plan as the religious principles oppose to their incorporation in a sculpture and the religious legislator would have rejected with great indignation any similarity between him and the master of a manual skill, be this latter even the perfect one.

More the religiosity or the religious moral is doctrinal and ascetic, more it is incompatible with the art voluptuous hypertrophy. In the ideal society that Plato imagined, he knew why he should be afraid of arts and so much the more had to be afraid some of the most important Church Fathers and legislators of the medieval Christian Church.

Savonarola rightfully revolted against Lorenzo de Medici the Magnificent, protector of some of the most mundane, refined and lustful arts; and Tolstoy, as he was restricting himself to his moral and religious absolutist attitude dominated by an abstract Father who was asking to subordinate feelings and to refrain any bodily desire, he grew more and more critic against art, not only against Shakespeare or Beethoven but also against his proper literary works.

The antinomy between sacredness and beauty, religion and art, antinomy that can be dissimulated or cosmeticized on limited periods of the cultural becoming, but which can reappear later on reinforced, seems us to be based on the tension, the lack of adequation or the incompatibility between the transcendent and the telluric, between heaven and earth. The religion consistent with itself is or should be the general idea, specifically the general idea projected beyond all that is accidental and real within this visible and touchable world. God as an old beard man remains a contradiction, and the Holy Spirit as a dove – an inconsistency which is really scandalous. The fact that the concrete representations, human and terrestrial have not been eliminated from the religious thought and the churches used them as an important pillar of self-support proves the real separation between theory and practice, the innumerable concessions which the idea of sacrality had to admit and promote in order to reach a certain efficiency of a ritual diversified in innumerable versions perfectly terrestrial and for a public which was not familiarized with the absolute idealism.

Based on its consistency with its proper condition, the religion should have used only abstract precepts, concepts, outlooks, laws, dogmas and doctrines. Its chance was that it could not act in this manner as its moral teachings would have rather sent to sleep its believers than to convert them to the religious belief; and our chance was that art succeeded, even in historical dramatic periods, to multiply its images, which were concrete, sensitive, particular, real, human. Reversing the demonstration, it results that the art which was used to support these teachings is not religious in itself, as it marvels us in its immediate concreteness and within the meanings of this concrete existence, without mediating in a compulsory way, the “ascendance” to a superior and exterior metaphysics. The following art, more laicized, had little

difficulties to get inspired from various events, scenes, images, conflicts, feelings described in the “saint books” of the beginnings, but not from those general laws and legislations, especially those referring to the invisible “world of beyond”: the “physics” of art had nothing to share with the religious metaphysics. Really, what would have used the European paintings and music, prose and dramaturgy from the rigorous texts of Paul’s Epistles? In contrast, the history of Paul’s evangelization, on Damascus’ road, from Saul the persecutor of the new religion in Paul, the fervent evangelizer, could inspire plainly many artistic versions as when reading the “Facts of the Holy Apostles” artists are more interested by the facts themselves, humanly significant, than by their apostolically holy meanings.

D. Let’s come back to earth from the celestial world, as beauty and art are terrestrial par excellence. As a consequence, the most terrestrial among the values proves to be the one that is the most proximate. That is why we left for the last discussion a values usually situated at the beginning of comparative enumerations (due more frequently to a certain disregard than esteem): *the useful*. The connections and the interferences between beauty and the economic value of utility are not difficult to explain: the latter has already incorporated itself in facts, objects, goods; it does not wander in the far away spheres of ideas more or less pure, as science, philosophy, moral or religion. Nevertheless, and here the argumentation should be rectified, this massive incorporation of the value substance within goods remains only peripheral in comparison to the basic coordinates. This basis is the most interesting and we approximate it by means of abstract and general aspects when invoking “the quantity of the invested work”, “value of exchange”, “prime cost and cost price”, “productivity”, “profitability”, “profit”, etc. That is why the way from the real economic value to its study by the science of political economy is smooth enough: the general substance (content) imposes its generalized and substantial understanding. The economic value, practical par excellence, is thus reunited with the theoretical, scientific value.

The piece of metal or the scrap of paper which symbolizes “money” are in fact conventional and accidental forms in relationship with their

necessary content – reason which makes possible their substitution one with the other. The idea of the possible and compulsory exchange among similar goods through a unique and abstract substance is based on the economic value for which the visible aspect of this special object plays a subordinated role if not completely negligible.

This domination of the quantitative relationship for the case of the exchange value determined Marx to explain many times the hostility of the capitalist production against artistic activities, which are by definition qualitative and spiritual: because, if quoting one of his examples, a volume written by Propertius can be exchanged for eight ounces of tobacco even if we have in mind the clear distinction between the tobacco value of use and that of the elegy; and if Milton looks like an unproductive worker for the capitalist owner while a less valuable writer which works for his librarian in the same manner as that applied in factories is a productive worker, then it seems that the capitalist alienation can have not only negative consequences on activities qualitatively distinct and situated at distinct levels of achievement but also, this alienation can attribute a superiority to those products which, even they are inferior to some others, they do contribute to get larger profits. This deviation is possible not only before but also after the process of alienation of large masses in the capitalist regime. It is possible just because of the strengthened role assured to the quantitative aspects used in the evaluation of the economical production in contrast with the qualitative aspects necessary in the evaluation of the artistic creativity: the quantity is abstract and leads towards abstract forms while the quality is based on the concrete and obliges to concreteness! Through this distinction neither the genesis of the aesthetic values as consequence of the economic ones (“generally speaking arts emerged from crafts”, says G. Călinescu in his *Principles of aesthetics*) are put in difficulty, nor the chances of their collaborations in a fruitful and fertilizing manner when the unilateral and leveling characteristic would grow indistinct or be eliminated. A possibility opposed to the failed one through the misappropriation of values is present itself in the fact that any economic accomplishment, abstractly-quantitative, is based on the individual, concrete quality, achieved and transformed of useful objects. These ones are completely real, we see them, and we touch and perceive

them with all their individualizing aspects. As man succeeds in communicating with all the individual signs of each object, as he becomes interested in the autonomous and distinct form of the object, not only in the abstract work condensed in goods, or the variation in price between selling and buying, or the amount of capital accumulated through the traffic of goods; as his mineralogical feelings will be refined taking into consideration the specific dimension, color and the playful sparkling lights specific to *this* precious stone which he loves and as he will no longer be interested only in the abstract evaluation, or the price in any devices, a price to which the mineral remains a simple pretext which he might also forget or which he might get rid of at a certain moment – the useful and the beautiful, the economic value and the artistic one will mix together more and more organically in his life and activity, in his thoughts and feelings. What else can we find in the industrial aesthetics, the aesthetics of useful products if not right this decisive transfer from the abstract-quantitative values to the concrete-qualitative ones? This corresponds to a particular condition and to a complementary consequence of the historical leap from the realm of necessity to that of freedom!

1. If the entire demonstration and its purpose are correct, they have also the capacity to keep and alleviate the difficulties of the antinomy from which we started. Our certitudes, to which a century of engineering processes has already provoked cracks, start being regained not only in the domain of the artistic creativity but also within the non-artistic, but aesthetic processes among which those of industrial realm have a primordial position. What the antinomy consists in? In the fact that, due to the tradition and to the new industrial achievements, the economic-utilitarian-functional criteria assure a fundamental position to the serial production which can lose, under favorable social conditions, its “general-abstract” signs of old times in favor of a continuous re-individualization in as many distinct “objectual personalities”; as well as the same “personalization” can be regained also in a subjective plan – at the level of production and consuming, at the level of generating and absorbing those products. The aesthetic aspect has the role to contribute in a stressed out measure to the articulation, consolidation and getting accustomed to this new individuated utility and individual use.

In such a vision considerably extended, the beauty is not any more a luxury; it cannot be reduced any more to an exterior embellishment of objects, accepted or ignored from case to case. On the contrary, it becomes a decisive instrument of a full objectual and subjective "humanization" within and against the series. The aesthetic aspect induces hence in the material production a qualitative coefficient of individuality at the level of micro-series and – ideally – at the level of each product. The economic criterion should accept this normal alliance in a greater measure than it actually does; in the same time the ally should make more decisive efforts in order to consolidate the alliance. Let us not forget that the object is form, it has thus chances to become the representative form, superiorly expressive for the development of those wishing and capable to express themselves through it. The distance between the material civilization and the spiritual culture, reduced in great measure during the century of technological revolution, could diminish further down to surprising overlaps.

If these ideas are also well founded, it means that we should not eliminate the well-known characteristics and always reasserted of the beauty, even under the uncertain conditions which we underlined at the beginning. Put under inherent changes, these characteristics do not manifest any desire of vanishing, on the contrary they succeed to revigorate even on an apparently "hostile" terrain; this "hostility" is simply the consequence of certain unilateral, deviated and falsified processes.

We can conclude for the moment that the specificity of the aesthetic value supposes the implication in singularity, the presence not *through* but *within* concreteness. In comparison to the truth, good, sacredness and useful, beauty is the phenomenal, the individual and unrepeatable; it is always the form of *its* content and the unique sign of *its* meaning. It could not be transposed, transformed, transferred at any moment as it is a uniqueness which is identical only to itself: a new form would suppose another content, a different sign would have another meaning, and a changed appearance would belong to another essence. The aesthetic can exist only at singular: personalized as a "personality". In order to be aesthetic, the dialog between "this" and "that", between "he" and "I", should be a dialog between personalities!

2. Through its concrete uniqueness, beauty comes back to the condition of nature –after the moment when, being a value, it moved away from nature. Its status remains ambiguous, “intermediary” between nature, completely natural and the spirit, completely spiritualized: the most “natural” among the spiritual activities and the most spiritual among the “natural” things!

We have mentioned before the nature as a distinct part of reality, as a particular and possible terrain of aesthetic manifestations, a domain which being humanized is however distinct from the human one. We understand now nature as the global reality, which, against all its newly produced signs, succeeds in maintaining its initial freshness and vigor; man, as a superior existential criterion and as supreme existential proof, mainly proving to nature his vitality mainly his vitality. We understand now nature as that existence which opposes to consciousness, what is “natural” as opposed to what is “artificial”. And the paradox we intend to make evident consists in the capacity of Beauty as value (“unnatural” as any value) to regain a natural status; it also consists in the capacity of art (“super-existential”, as any form of consciousness) to rebuild an existential status. “The second game” of the valorization goes back to a new “primary game”. This happens in this value domain. And from this point of view, the aesthetic value is situated a little further in comparison to other values than the immense realm of reality from which it takes inspiration and which it reshapes.

The “naturalness” of beauty can be demonstrated through numerous examples; and numerous consequences derive from it. We shall limit to a few examples. First of all, to the prior mentioned uncertainty of a possible distinction between pre- or non – beauty and the beauty of certain real objects or processes uncertainty which is easy to explain through what we mentioned before. This is due to the fact that the beautiful object is in fact the *same* real object in its practical and usual existence but which has also some other characteristics having also many other functions. And then, how to use this distinction? In the case of art, things are not different: nobody will confound a painted dog with the idea of dog, the distinction between “real” and ideal being evident – but he could sure compare, up to an identification between the painted dog and the real one due to a shocking similarity between the two “realities” even

though one of them was achieved through an ideal mediation, usually however ignored or made indistinct. Substances do not move around separated from the phenomenon; they belong to the single one evidence that we can perceive immediately. Art reasserts this evidence of life, at the end of a long and complex process, frankly speaking. In scientific thought, substances abstract themselves from their natural "captivity" and show up to our mind in their pure condition. This is the reason why in art the temptation of "copying" nature will be bigger, and this requires a permanent battle against its naturalist subordination to a preexistent model. Science is exonerated from this obligation: Mendeleev had no way to "copy" the table of his chemical elements directly from nature; he had to detach it from nature as one of its "secrets", to "invent" it through his analytical and generalizing capacities, which are characteristic for any man of science. Aristotle himself mentioned this dialectics between creativity and imitation: even if the thinker would "build his work on already happened events, he would not be less a poet due to this reason: nothing opposes to the fact that some of the happened events be as they were verisimilar and possible to happen and from this point of view, the one who imitates them can be named their creator" – idea that suggests a typization faithful to the typicality of the reality.

As for the artistic activities, the already mention situation encourages nonprofessional expressions, valuable or dilettante; on the other side, the scientific activity supposes right from the beginning, a specialized preparation, known by everybody as indispensable: no old person would imagine possible that he could write a treatise on the theory of relativity, knowing for sure he does not know it, he has no necessary scientific knowledge in order to understand it and so much the less to develop it in a treatise – however it would happen many times that the old person desire to write his memories, describing his life, all that he saw and lived and to finally produce even an autobiographic novel of large dimensions. The publishing houses are always a target for dilettantes. The opposite of the dilettantism, very frequent in this domain, includes also a true refreshment of valuable writers who appear among non-professionals. We know that they have to appropriate numerous theories and special artistic methods, elements of skill and mastership – in the same time people could consider extremely normal

such an activity situated in the proximity of the life itself – which they live anyway and thus they are convinced they know it. Their judgment, reduced to the simplest level would be the following: I like this forest – why should I not paint it? I speak my maternal language – why should I not use it for writing poems? I experienced a great love adventure – why should I not describe it in a short novel? I like crooning melodies – how could I become a singer (at least of pop music)? These are illusive judgments as they do not take into consideration how difficult it is to get the knowledge of that artistic language; they are also correct judgments as they have the intuition of its *specific nonspecificity*: how could a poet clearly separate his life from his writings?

The feeling – this is the word we need and to which we always come back with stubbornness. The scientific thought is “special”, the artistic feeling is “general” as structure and source or target: anyone can live it and anybody can relive it. “The Romanian was born as a poet” localizes this idea; this formula could not be extended towards the profession of astronomer, physicist, or physician – for no people or large group of persons. People pretend spontaneously and at the common level of perception to have the right to judge the works of art but not also the authenticity of scientific theories...

At the level of degree of importance of feelings, we consider interesting the fact that love is considered the most frequent source of inspiration and a special occasion for the manifestation of beauty and art as well. This option is the reflection of an authentic quality. The structure of love, if we may say this, is similar to that of beauty itself. It has the characteristics of a prototype of the poem: it certifies an unrepeatable individuality, a sensorial sensibility, an intense and self-sufficient feeling, a superior “interest” addressed to *this* partner with *these* inner and manifested characteristics. The sexual attraction, strictly physiological, maintains itself at an elementary level, “abstract”, leveling, as it supposes an instinctual satisfaction by a hazardous relationship, indistinct and replaceable with any other one. Love as a human-humanizing relationship is each time concrete, individual, unique and total in its numerous details; it acquires a specific concreteness to a reality which is not only “natural” but also “animated”. Love as feeling is almost poetry, a prelude of it: prefiguration of the aesthetic-artistic configurations. Each man knows this intimate

relationship during his day to day existence – but which becomes for a while, unusual; man believes himself being an artist due to that overwhelming feeling which possessed him; as for their deep and complete fusion, thousands of works of art proved it during centuries.

Between the fully or “almost” artistic object, between the real subject and the virtual artist, the distance is minimum, of “one step”. However we ignore it, the confusion appears. This can generate annoying charges; and also joyful qualities. As an example, a spontaneous attraction of value and aesthetic valorization towards a “democratic” way of being. The goods in this situation are those well known. They are perceived with senses and capacities specific to all of us. More than any other object, the art remains “an object among objects” and the man of art – “a man among others”. Beauty and the art regenerate due to these natural and simple relationships. Each productive activity *could* become beautiful; each common person *could* become an artist.

Together with many other exquisite reasons, the disappearance of art is impossible due to this situation. The main reason for which we are not worried by the gloomy predictions concerning the imminent “death of the art” is right this concrescence between art and life. We take into consideration not only the fact that art gets inspiration from life, extracts its substance from life but there is also a fact that include and supersedes all the others: art is *similar to life*, it is structured *as life is*. There are of course also other activities and their products come also *from life*. However, they are not *similar* to life. They do not take *the form of life*. Art and only art acts like this. Only art produces the illusion of form identity. That is why it can be confounded with life. Its vitality seems to us a warranty for its survival. As far as the human existence spiritually organized will survive, art will continue to flourish as the most “lively” structure, emanation and configuration of the human spirituality.

3. A “natural”, “real” and “vital” form of spirituality can be only *total* and *integrating*: one quality justifies the other one. The syncretism of the aesthetic value is also confirmed by the fact that this value is situated, in the history of aesthetics, at one of the ending sides of the axiological table, either at its beginning or at the end of its value hierarchy. Some theoreticians name beauty, the first value, having a spiritual characteristic,

prior to any intellectual-analytical product, situated within the domain of primordial intuitions, global and not yet differentiated; some others consider beauty as the last and the most precious proof of spiritual human creativity, following the sequenced knowledge and particular activities, a final recovery of the "cosmoidal" totality.

We are not interested in the supposed "inferiority" or "superiority" within the chain of value hierarchy; these partisan options unveil each time their unilateral character. We want to extract from these debates only the comparison of the work of art to an integral and integrating "cosmos"; it derives from the idea of a synthetic structure which it achieves either if it is produced before any differentiation or after them, on territories "still" or "again" neighbored to nature.

"Cosmicity" means *world*, simply saying. Among many other virtues, the other values (except philosophy) do not pretend having this property, the fact that in their singular existence they appeared in a self-sufficient "world" due to this totalizing characteristic. The work of art pretends this proud status. Such pretention could support the autonomist theories. We use to recognize the gnoseological roots of the idealism in the fact that one characteristic, side or limit of knowledge is developed in a unilateral, exaggerated, amplified manner; the transformation in a straight line and independent of each segment of a curved line: a sterile flower developed on the living tree of knowledge. The autonomism proceeds in a similar way. It results also from the exaggeration of the role of a single characteristic. If, considered in itself, the artistic object looks as a total and self-sufficient world, then it can be hermetically separated from the worlds which collaborated to its creation and from those with which it will continue to collaborate. A possible vision becomes the only possible vision.

Science does not pretend to be "autonomous"; that is why the temptation of "autonomization" does not appear in this case. Lenin says that the idealism "does not see the forest due to the trees". What would happen if *this* tree will declare itself the climax of perfection and would ask us to take care only of it? And what if this moment would continue for an excessive period of time? Our example is intended to suggest the possibility to adopt a unilateral position similar to that of the "autonomist" aesthetician in connection to nature; as in nature also, the

“total individuality” could demand us a view separated from other connections and out of the context. Each cosmic planet is connected through numerous nature laws to the other planets. What would happen if someone would look only to this one, not taking into consideration what is outside this unique existence? Would this contemplation be somehow an “autonomous” one? And why we would not imagine the system of works of art like a cosmic system, in which each work moves on its independent orbit, well established for that work and determinant, corresponding to its proper global individuality? Reducing the comparison, one “world” would be the earth or a continent or a country or a district or a mountain or a river. If Faulkner saw in this way his origin country why should we not consider in a similar way the imaginary country of its books, Yoknapatawpha, developed from a transfiguration which would also be real in its ideality?

The “world” criterion (the self-sufficient and self-faithful “cosmicity”) brings us back to the idea of “the closed work of art”, correlated to any necessary “opening”. We already mentioned that against the too exigent concept of “genius” many objections have been already expressed. If we try to find a simple explanation and reason to this concept through which it could regain its relevance in a time when uncontrolled gestures and noisy exclamations are not very well accepted, we would prefer its synonymy with the “world maker”. One can see that even after its laic-rationalist demolition, the Romantic supposition referring to the “demiurge” survives in a more normal meaning. If the artist is really an artist, then he builds a world which is able to depend no more either on anybody or anything, or on its creator; and then, if he is not a “genius” he betrays his destiny.

In order not to be suspected of exaggerations, we shall say that this way of understanding the concept reunites the “world maker” and the “world generator” (the one who bore the world as the Mother of God)²; or, born was each of us; and as each of us is a virtual, unrepeatable and complete universe, the act of giving life proved to be, *in nuce*, a “genial” act. This is proved by the fact that there is no other more valuable evaluation for a work of art than its being compared to a

² The additional note belongs to the translator.

living man; this suggests the existence of a complete universe, for itself and for me. Here we can see again the criterion of nature and naturality which assures to the work of art a higher quality in comparison to its all other particular virtues: namely the fact that exists, that it *is*. The fact of existing, the certified presence which is contested by nobody and at no time is the *alpha and omega* of the authentic, durable, (read genial) art. Isn't it miraculous the fact that we compare the most valuable artists to a rock, a mountain or an ocean?! It is clear that we try to suggest their presence, a presence situated behind and beyond any particular characteristic. Their particular pride and their supreme appreciation is the simplest and also the most complicated fact, the fact that they really *are*.

That is why gods were always imagined as artists in ancient representations. As they created a world "from nothing", each time another complete world was created (born). *Genesis of the universe* is the first chapter of that old primordial book, which is also named *Genesis*. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." During the first day He separated light from darkness. During the second day, He made "the expanse", naming it "sky" and separated the water under the expanse and the water above it. During the third day, He made that the land produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees that bear fruit with seed in it. During the fourth day, God made lights in the expanse of the sky, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night, in order to separate day from night, light from darkness. During the fifth day, God created the great creatures of the sea and winged birds to fill the seas and to increase in number on the earth. During the sixth day, God created wild animals and livestock creatures, each according to its kind; and finally, God created man in His image and likeness, man and woman, which should be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground on over the entire Earth! What else could represent this story than the genesis of a coherent and astonishing *work of art*? With one condition, achieved of course, to have imagined also an *artist*, capable to achieve and bring this project to its completeness; an authentic artist which is capable to know what he has to do, and who, during his creating process, be also capable to check up his achievements, distancing

himself from them in order to confront his plan with the consecutive “materializations” of this process: “And God “saw that the light was good” – as a consequence His work could go on up to the moment when “God saw all that He made, and it was very good”. And if He would have been consistent with Himself, after this acknowledgement, He should have completely retired: the work does exist; we do not need the artist anymore!

Taking into account this idea we should amend in a certain measure our prior opinion concerning the opposition between religion and art; even though our amendment does not refer to the domain taken into consideration there, it is complementary to the same perspective. Imagining the creation and the creator not in thought but in the process of active work (which is in agreement with the distinction mentioned at that occasion), it cannot so much reunite religion with art but makes possible the transfer of the religious story in an artistic one. As the *single* distinction, decisive however, between the real world and the represented one concerns the person who achieved it, meaning the absence or the presence of the one who produced it, a human being or one who is imagined by men in strict connection with the way they are and act (in the Biblical example, God imagines man in His image only *after* the moment when man imagined God similar to him: the Creator had been created Himself!). As religion erases this distinction, postulating teleological and theologically the presence of a creator even of the existing world – this world appears as a (virtual) creation of art.

Parents are also tempted to venerate their children, metaphorically, as their most valuable works. And it is undoubtful that this tree, river, hill would have been teleological, “created by somebody”, imagined and made by someone, - they would be considered works of art as the famous works of architecture. Reversely: any product of an authentic producer can have aesthetic-artistic hopes; then, why the constructor of contemporary gigantic and harmonious, massive and elegant hydro-electric power stations could not be compared to the builder of the Egyptian pyramids?

4. *The “Impurity” of Art* was the title of one of our articles written in 1968, included after three years in the collection of studies *Dialectics and*

Aesthetics. Since then we intended to impose a reversed and shocking formula, polemic to all the traditional “purisms” and with those which were reenacted from time to time during the last decades. Our formula gained terrain, has been accepted and started to migrate freely through the national debates on aesthetics. We shall mention some of the assertions on which we base our idea. By their means we will end up our way of defining beauty.

The common attitude of researchers was to analyze, within the axiological systems where they accepted not only each value but also to develop its characteristics and distinctions in relation with all the other values. This analytic procedure, of successive elimination of “foreign bodies”, in order to unveil a distinct core at a time, was applied to the economic, theoretical, ethical, religious values and then, using a methodological transfer considered correct, to the aesthetic value itself. Beauty was looked for necessarily *elsewhere*, and representing *something else*, distinct from the useful, truth, good or sacredness. Some researchers pushed this option up to the extreme purism, others, admitting its distortion to the practical reality, tried to reconcile them taking into consideration the presence of some extra-aesthetic factors within the work of art and which remain distinct from its aesthetic core. Transferred into the inner side of art, the opposition aesthetic - extra-aesthetic, autonomous-heteronomous, pure - non pure generates the same insuperable difficulties: elimination of all political, economic, scientific, philosophical, ethical implications fact that is equivalent to the dilution, emaciation of the “aesthetic specificity”, which will become less and less expressive as it is more and more purified. At the end of the effort of autonomization, beauty will become volatile: its exclusive presence will cause its total disappearance! Is it not due to this extremely bizarre situation that aestheticians had great difficulties in defining the central object and the central category of their discipline, than to the analysis of their particular, practical and theoretical consequences? As, in opposition to many other researchers, the aesthetician has still to proceed to the main and fundamental investigation about the proper nature of his domain, more difficult, anyway, than the multiple consequences of this specificity: knowing, in a Spinozian manner, the *attributes* and substance *changes* which he analyzes, his more critical

restraints refer exactly to this *substance*. Even today, after he had discovered so much about *arts*, about beauty *versions* and about the aesthetic *manifestations*, he is overwhelmed by the fundamental queries which also concerned predecessors: what is *art* and what is *beauty*? (That is why we developed this reflection about these concepts. In aesthetics, even now they seem to be the most obscure. Any treaty of aesthetics or series of conferences confronts with the most significant difficulties at its beginning when trying to clarify its object of investigation, which is quite simple for other disciplines).

Such a precarious condition culminated with the resigned acceptance of its incapacity to define the beauty. Even though however, the failure could be understood as a first mark of a possible successful outcome: the paradoxes of methodology were indicating something about the paradoxical condition of the investigated object. The bad-luck of substantial and "territorial" limitation of beauty from the other values was indicating a clear "resistance" of the beauty itself to this treatment. The intentions proved to be inadequate, expressed or hidden, to apply to the art a logic distillation of the "pure essence" that science was imposing. This generated the following paradox: the purist aesthetician had a scientific attitude borrowed from a repudiated domain, considered as a "foreign" one.

We tried to explain the reason of this inadvertence: beauty is not the part, characteristic, or the law, substance, essence of an object but right this living object, divers, multiple, concrete, individual; the phenomenon as an organic totality of its innumerable characteristics in their "impure" totality. The aesthetic and artistic fundamental gesture is an *integrating* one, not an separating one, and this makes possible a more *synthetic* way of reception of art not an analytic one.

Science, as we already explained, passes beyond the "case" in order to reveal the repeatability of the law; "the case" remains instead, from the beginning to its end, the unique terrain where the art acts. Science is obsessed by essences; art admires the appearance of the coming out (revealing, manifestation). Dialecticians have understood and are obliged to understand that the essence of beauty is the appearance itself, its capacity to appear in front of us in a vivacity and concreteness magnifically "impure" – and to also admit (in the past this

was not enough explained but it was also compulsory) the incapacity to apply to this value a “pure” methodology of research.

The abstract thought of the scientist is artificial as it stops the continuous movement; it separates the inseparable parts of the whole, analyzes and penetrates the depths which do not directly reveal, depths that should be understood by the intermediating but also mortifier effort of reason. The concrete thinking-feeling-living of the artist can explore these depths only when remaining on the surface, only if it keeps their innumerable vibrations, osmoses and interdependences, only when it will unify and reunify the infinite diversity of the world within a new “world”. Artificial as any consciousness, it becomes again superiorly-natural due to its adherence to facts, events, life processes, due to its possibility to become concrete, individual and total as the macro- and micro world around us is also.

The aesthetic value seems to produce the most perfect combination between artificial and natural, between techniques and nature, idea and reality, thought and feeling – combination where the last terms recover the first position. The unification between over-sensible and sensible becomes rather *the sensible* with over-sensible characteristics than the over-sensible purely and simply sensibilized; the alliance between values and concreteness also sooner becomes the concreteness with value senses than the value with concrete characteristics. (The accent are relative, they suggest however an order of meanings.) Art gets a strange squaring of the circle: the value is epidermic, and the epidermis is important this time; the value appears, shows itself to us, and it deserves to be seen and heard. The condition of beauty and art remains this specific and confusing “*physics – metaphysics*” where the single possible *transcendence* is the one which is proper to the *immanence*. An anemic “artistic idea” is the only reasonably formulated sooner as an idea than art. If we could grasp the ultimate essences of art (as a concentration of drugs), we could dispense from art; this because art remains the most “touchable thought”: finally, the character is the single idea of the character; the plot is the single idea of the plot; the act is the single idea of the act; dimension, color, tonality are the single ideas of dimension, color, tonality.

Progresses of the abstract thought and science, admirable in the highest degree, have troubled however, in a certain degree, the balance

of the ways the modern man can communicate with the world and with himself. For many of us, proud sons of the 20th century, consciousness is synonymous to abstract thought. Gaining in rigorous thinking, our abstract thought has diminished in vigor, color, freshness and vivacity; flexibility is regained through a more direct and diverse, freer and more multilateral contact with the world. We do not have the intention to dramatize the above mentioned separation; we only mention it, as it can be easily observed also within the domain of arts: oriented sometime against the idea, "purism" has been revigorated recently in a version apparently opposed, desensitized, essentialized, "cold". And this even though arts cannot be reduced to their "problems" no matter how profound, twisted, problematic they would be. As well as the modern artist can be more intelligent, a huge brain can have more convolutions which would be more subtle, refined and unusually combined. He remains a talented person with all the natural gifts, with all his impulsions generated from an unlocalized side: living "soul", total, not interrupted in his originary and constantly reborn simplicity.

Situated to the cross section between nature and philosophy, art oscillates usually between them maintaining itself however within the limits of its real-ideal dimension. Art is nature raised at a philosophical level through which man enters again the complete and eternal existence. It does not allow the insulation from intelligence but demands a continuous and diverse dialogue with life.

During the continuous historical becoming of consciousness we used to separate the primitive syncretism from the following diversification of various domains. At its origins, the value was not segmented, non-compartmented; the diverse later on spiritual regions can pretend to have the same unitary and synthetic origins. Only the modern underrating of various specializations introducing supplementary meanings should be the one modified – especially in the case of arts. Each form of consciousness is submitted to radical specialization, either in connection to the exterior, to the other spiritual manifestations, or in the interior, by a diversification of its proper sub-components. Art opposes to specialization a constant reversed tendency, a syncretic one, which we will not find in a similarly explicit form in the development of other domains of consciousness (except philosophy). Resuming, we

could say that while the political, scientific, moral and philosophical thought can maintain themselves in a relatively autonomous condition, one in comparison to other and in comparison to art, the latter cannot practically be separated from its sisters: that is why many modern artists were obsessed by politics, moral or philosophy!

On one hand, the initial syncretism was extremely favorable to art, the other components of consciousness being also included in products which were artistic at first sight. On the other hand, at the end of its ambiguous movement produced later on, art became more specialized, but it also maintains something of its old non-specialized status; on the ascendant spiral of history, art continuously comes back to its initial syncretism. Autonomous in its final existence, art is generated and structured continuously as the most non-autonomous among the spiritual activities, integrating in its structure numerous "foreign bodies" from which it regenerates. Beauty has a similar destiny: its specificity absorbs all that is un-specific. The aesthetic organism is configured from biological, physiological and psychological, logic, linguistic and scientific, economic, political and ethic cells – from infinite non-aesthetic elements, properly speaking without which the aesthetics does not exist and without their acknowledgement it could not be understood.

After millenary avatars and multiple modern experiments, art remains a synthetic domain, above all, intending to rebuild, regain – with all its specific intellectual powers and particular instruments – the *totality of the world*. The miracle of beauty and of the art consists right in this coming back towards the living and unitary nature, towards the living, organic, complete, total human being. The reception of the aesthetic value is, at various levels, the privilege of all humans; it is supported by all the human capacities, either biological or psychological, sensitive or affective, rational and volitive, theoretical or productive, of all aesthetic tastes and convictions of the social human being. And the artist continues to use his human capacities even if they are hypertrophied, seeing and hearing, feeling and thinking, transmitting to other human beings this usual-unusual capacity of seeing and hearing, of feeling and thinking.

From the ancient syncretism to the modern synthesis – this is the way the aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object go through; the structure

gets more perfect but remains faithful to itself. The unspecific specificity and the global particularity become fundamental qualities of beauty and art. These qualities make any clarification difficult about beauty and art; which we simply “feel” and “rethink” with difficulty. Which practically charm us and theoretically confuse us? Decisive it is, of course, the practice. And the theoretician, how will he restraint his confusion? How will he succeed in defining this “impurity”?

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